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FEATURE STORY

THE PHANTOM MOTOR

BY LAURA REID MONTGOMERY

William Hamilton Osborne Is Author of Our Next Feature Story, "THE BLACKJACK."

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURE STORY PAGE

THE PHANTOM MOTOR, by Laura Reid Montgomery 1

SERIAL STORY

THE DETECTIVE'S MISTAKE, by Gilbert Mackey.. 22

SHORT STORIES

THE HAWARDE SILK ROBBERY, by Chief of Detectives Murphy 18

DEPARTMENTS

Strange Experiences 25

CURRENT NEWS

Feet on Snake—Save the Wheat from Mice—Taking the Sting Out of the Bee—Emotion in Animals—Universal Language of the Indian—Farmers Grow Friendly to Snakes—Selecting Fighting Bulls—Queer Remedies of the Past—Gatun Lake is Most Beautiful 26

THE PHANTOM MOTOR

A STORY OF KEEN DETECTIVE WORK

By LAURA REID MONTGOMERY

PART ONE

THE cathedral was crowded with a fashionable and wealthy assemblage to witness the marriage of Jean Abernathy. But there had been a long wait. Then the best man hurried over to the bride's mother, and gasped excitedly:

"Dismiss the guests; there will be no wedding!"

The bride's mother regarded the flushed young man with incredulous eyes. Was he going mad?

"Phil has gone; I saw him. Have the bishop announce that sudden illness has postponed the ceremony," insisted the best man, as he saw the exquisite little bride whispering with her bridesmaids in the vestry-room.

Strains of music floated out to them; the organist, determined to earn his hundred-dollar fee, was giving the unheeding congregation a musical treat to shorten the unheard-of wait. The bride, catching sight of the well-brushed blonde head, signaled to the best man, but he pretended not to see and turned to Mrs. Abernathy:

"I'll tell you later, but I think it would be wiser to send them away at once."

"Yes," declared Mr. Abernathy. After whispering a few words to the bishop he went to his daughter.

Jean was looking through a crack in the vestry door at the well-filled cathedral. The masses of white flowers perfumed the air and the lights shining down upon the exquisite gowns of the women, brought out the sparkle of jewels and gleamed upon the golden eagle that held the great Bible at the altar. Her gaze rested upon a pale, dark-eyed man absently fingering the bow of satin ribbon that decorated the end of his pew. He was one of the close family friends. His air simulated a levity that she knew to be assumed. Jean read the depression that lingered

about the well-cut mouth and filtered through the forced smile that he turned upon the sparkling face of the debutante at his side. Although he had taken his dismissal at Jean's hands almost silently, she knew that he had felt it keenly.

"Poor Cecil," she thought, "I hope he will forget soon. Daisy Le Clair is looking at him very sweetly and yet——" the recollection of the man she was to marry again flooded her mind: the debonair man of the world who would give her a life of hitherto undreamed-of luxury.

His attentions had been furiously fought for among the society buds; it was a triumph for the girl in her teens to have captured him, and she wondered seriously if she had allowed this factor to assume undue importance in her decision when she had said "yes." Then she glanced over at the guests again and wondered what they were waiting for.

"Where is Philip?" she asked, as her father approached.

He bent down and whispered and a mask of pallor settled over her small face; taking his arm silently, she swept out of the vestry-room, past her twelve waiting bridesmaids, past the tall maid of honor, who gazed at her with sparkling eyes, scenting some disaster, and out to the waiting car.

The man who sprang to open the door watched her curiously; he knew the bridegroom had failed to appear, but he read nothing from the quiet, high-bred face.

When she reached home she insisted upon being present at the interview in her father's library.

"We were about ready to go to the cathedral," said the best man, Mortimer Jones, "when Philip thought of change and looked through his bill-fold. He laughed and said, 'I'd better not forget that; there will be fees and tips. Most of these bills are large; can you give me change for a hundred dollars?' I did so, and, as he was putting the case in his pocket, the telephone rang. He answered and appeared annoyed——"

"Just what did he say?" interrupted Mr. Abernathy, with a keen glance from under his bushy eyebrows.

"He listened and said something impatiently under his breath, then, 'No! it is quite impossible, as I said before——' He listened again and cried, 'Well, if it is as important as that and there is no one else, I suppose I can go for five minnutes, but——' he slammed the receiver down and finished dressing hastily, fairly snatching his coat from his man."

"'Anything wrong?' I asked him.

"He started for the elevator, pulling on his gloves as he went. 'Yes,' he called. I went after him, for it was nearly time to start, and I was afraid he'd be late. His car was drawn up in front of the hotel and there was a blue motor-car drawn up at the entrance, and as he went out the door of this car opened and a white-gloved hand waved to him. I saw a woman bundled in white furs lean out and he entered. She saw me and laughed: 'Don't wait too long,' and then the car sped off into the night."

"Did she telephone him from the hotel telephone?"

"I suppose so, but she might have been somewhere near by."

Mr. Abernathy cleared his throat and shot a wary glance at his wife; he had always felt that Philip Latimer was too old a man for Jean; he was thirty-five years old, and he would have selected Cecil Gray as being more suitable. Latimer was immensely wealthy, but at his age he was almost certain to have had some entanglements with women, and here they were in the midst of one. He had, apparently, deserted his bride on the night of her wedding.

His wife, however, wasted no time in idle conjectures. "Do you know who the woman was?" she asked.

The best man flushed. "Why——" he paused.

"Well, do you or don't you?"

"She is called the Countess of Branksmere, and the men are all wild about her." Mortimer Jones averted his eyes from Jean as he spoke.

"You must have seen her very clearly to have recognized her," said the matron tartly; men were all alike.

"I know her car and her face was directly under an arc light; she is well known in the cafes downtown."

Mrs. Abernathy frowned. "I detest those foreign women—always spreading temptations for rich men with their staring black eyes and bold ways——"

"The Countess is very blonde with blue eyes——"

"Don't defend the creature; we'll probably find he has met with foul play. Send for a detective at once!"

Jean crept away to her room unable to bear any more surmises or cruel suspicions—the fact remained that she had been jilted at the altar by a man who had, she had supposed, been ardently in love with her. She had been flattered by the attentions from this man of the world who was so many years her senior, and while she had not been romantically in love with him she had looked forward happily to a life beside him. Her father was rich, but her mother had been consumed with a vast desire to outshine her friends in her reckless expenditures, and there had always been money discussions in their home which her mother had spoken of when she had urged Jean to accept Latimer. "It is as easy to love a rich man as a poor one," Mrs. Abernathy had remarked, and Jean had wondered at her worldliness, but when Philip had proposed she had found herself, rather to her own surprise, saying "yes." Later she had wondered if she really possessed the capacity for loving that she read about in books, for she did not flame and thrill according to the pages of emotions she perused. Now, however, when he was lost she felt differently; when her mother had spoken of the blonde woman something primeval awoke within her, and she felt an intense desire for revenge. She longed to punish the mysterious woman who was known in the cafes.

Clarke Leatherwood, the detective, listened to the meager details furnished by Mr. Abernathy and then departed in search of further information. It was most unlikely that there had been foul play, for if the Countess had intended anything of the sort she would not have called publicly for the banker, would not have driven him in her well known blue car. At the bank he learned that the Countess had several times visited the president in his private room. She had an account there and a safe deposit box and seemed to have been rather a troublesome client, always fussing over some trifle that she had insisted must be settled by the prsident. Philip Latimer was referred to in the financial world of Chicago as a man of the highest integrity, and it seemed absurd to think of him as a dupe for some so-called countess. He would never put such an affront upon his bride-to-be.

Clarke Leatherwood looked thoughtfully at the pale-eyed, efficient youngish women who held the position of secretary to the president. "What did she wish to see Mr. Latimer about?"

She smoothed her severe white collar and regarded him scornfully. "What do women ever want when they run after men?"

The detective said nothing. He had no difficulty in keeping dubious females at bay; the only woman he had ever proposed to had actually laughed, and he had always believed that the mirth had been directed at his nose, which was of unusual dimensions in a pasty face. His nose terminated bulbously and was of a rosiness not desirable, but this was through no fault of his, and he felt that the girl whom he had honored with his love had behaved unworth-

ily, so he tried to forget the words and glances of that interview. Therefore, he had no love for women as a whole, and he suspected this pale-eyed typist of guying him.

"I am questioning you. What did she want?"

"She said she wanted a checkbook with her coronet engraved upon it—she wanted special privileges in the safety deposit vaults—oh, many foolish things that gave her the excuse of being granted an interview with the head."

"Did she remain with him long?"

"Yes."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"When she came out did she look—flushed—or as though a flirtation had been in progress?"

"Her cheeks were usually very red, but she always wore a fluttering veil, so that one could hardly tell whether or not she painted. She probably did."

"As if," she confided to her chum at luncheon, "her cheeks had anything to do with kidnapping the bridegroom. He'll never find out anything until it's so old the papers have it."

Clarke Leatherwood traced the blue motor car to the apartment building where the Countess lived; her suite was on the first floor with a private entrance directly from the street so that the elevator boy had no opportunity of noting her guests. He skirted the premises thoughtfully. The windows were veiled with lace curtains so skilfully that although they appeared to be merely curtained the mesh was so thickly covered with small figures that nothing could be seen.

He rang the bell and a French girl opened the door.

"No, the Countess was not visible—such an hour to call," her manner implied.

"At what hour could I see her?" He handed her a half-dollar which she scrutinized dubiously; evidently she was in the habit of receiving large tips—and for what?

"My lady receives her friends from three o'clock on, but——"

Her tone relegated him to the depths, and her glance rested upon the street suggestively.

"Thank you again and again," he spoke effusively, and she wondered what he was so pleased about, but he had already gone with a curtly wave of his hat.

"Who was that, Ninette?"

The girl swiftly closed the door and hurried in. "Merely a book agent, my lady; he held his case behind him, but I saw it."

Mr. Leatherwood sauntered towards the alley behind Drexel Boulevard and, pushing his green hat a bit back on his head, stood smoking. Delivery wagons ambled through the alley, and boys leaped out and entered kitchen doors where cooks of various degrees of plumpness awaited them. When a grocer's wagon stopped behind number seventy-five Leatherwood sauntered out. "Got the package for apartment two?"

"Yep."

"I'll take it in for you."

"Sweet of you; after Ninette?"

"No; she's away this morning, and she asked me to take it in so the Countess won't know she's out. I'm staying there."

The boy whistled and scratched his head, but the horse, tired of standing, started, and he tossed the package over and returned to his wagon. A glance over his shoulder showed the stranger entering the kitchen at apartment two and satisfied him that he was no sneak thief after the lettuces and rice.

Leatherwood's rubber-heeled shoes made no sound as he entered.

The kitchen door had the key turned, but a pair of pliers turned it back without trouble. With the package under his arm, he went through the empty room; he could hear voices farther on, and he, therefore, turned into the dining-room. The table was littered with the remains of a late supper. An empty champagne bottle stuck a listless, gold-banded neck out of its silver pail, which was nearly full of melted ice. He noted interestedly that the service had been for two. The huge couch, heaped with vivid cushions, had a tumbled appearance; evidently the pert Ninette took her time about her morning work.

He took out his penknife and cut a small hole in the heavy Holland shade, not much above the cream-colored lace that edged it, and then looked under the couch, where his eye had been caught by something white. He snatched it up; it was a white tie badly crumpled and on the edge was a spot of crimson.

The murmur of voices became louder; the low musical tones rose angrily, and it was evident that the Countess was reproving her maid.

Her high heels clicked down the hardwood hall, which was dotted with oriental rugs, and Clarke remained quietly in the dining-room behind the door; as he had hoped Ninette passed muttering to herself as she flounced into the kitchen. He noiselessly passed out and up the hall, stepping gingerly that the treacherous rugs might not slip under him. The sound of running water in the bathroom caused a pleasant smile to part his lips, and he lifted the blue velvet curtain before a doorway. As he had figured, this was a bedroom. The costly cane and mahogany bedstead stood high in a curtained recess; the curtains of some gold-colored fabric were pulled back, revealing the silk sheets and lace-bordered pillows. A blue satin coverlet was dropping off on the high stool or bench which was tufted thickly with blue satin and had slender golden legs. The recess had two steps upward, and then the bench was used for greater convenience in stepping into bed. A pair of small carriage boots lined with white fur were near the bench lying on the rug.

All this he took in in one keen look, after which he hurried over to the dressing table. Here was the usual litter that prevails where the owner is not only wealthy but careless.

"The mistress is like the maid," he thought, surveying the spilled powder box and an unstoppered bottle of some heavy perfume, and then he leaned down. Under the floating blue veil which had been tossed down unfolded he saw a tiny bottle. It was empty, but the odor was plain. It had held chloroform.

This he put in his pocket, when a groan from the next room arrested his attention. He started towards it when the curtains were parted, and he was confronted by the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.

Golden hair streamed in curling lengths down to her very knees. Even in the surprise of the moment, Leatherwood could not help but see that the dimpled pink knees were bare, and that her feet were only partially covered by the half-slippers, as he termed the exquisite pink silk mules whose high silver heels kept her dainty flesh from touching the rugs.

Pink silk underwear clothed her sufficiently but unconventionally, but this did not embarrass the lady. Her brilliant blue gaze swept past him to the ballet-dancer doll which concealed her bed-telephone, and as she ran towards the steps to the bed her visitor vanished through the doorway.

Dropping his package of groceries in a shadowy part of the hall that would puzzle them when they fell over it, he turned the knob of the adjoining bedroom. It was locked, and hearing Ninette coming sulkily from the kitchen in

response to a shriek from the mistress he fled through the front door.

All day he lingered about the premises of the apartment, and at four o'clock handed a newsboy a dollar bill. "Take this note to the address written, and the man will give you another dollar. Scoot, now; it's past the time for your nap, boy."

In less than half an hour a covered car dashed up, and a small man alighted. Clarke told him to watch the entrance, and he drove the car to the alley corner where it was less noticeable in the dusk of the winter afternoon. Inside he found the clothes he had sent for, and a few minutes later a well-dressed woman with a shadowy black veil alighted holding a handsome leather purse.

"Good thing it is fashionable to carry a large purse, Tom," he smiled. "Are there extra cartridges in there, too?"

His servant nodded. He had no love for these proceedings, but he was absurdly fond of the crusty Leatherwood and would have even shot off the automatic if it would have helped his master.

"Stay at the corner here until I whistle."

It was now dark enough for Leatherwood to get nearer the window, and he cursed his stupidity in not having made a peephole in a bedroom shade.

"Have enough evidence now to detain the Countess, but if the police get their clumsy hand in she'll spirit the banker away under our very noses and I will never know her motive—must be a strong one to take such risks."

A tall, foreign-looking man approached the entrance of apartment two, and Leatherwood saw that he had a scar across his left cheek beginning at his mouth and extending well past his eyebrow. The door was opened before he rang and swiftly closed.

In a few minutes the maid, Ninette, came out wearing street clothes. She had hardly disappeared when a gray car—a limousine with the curtains drawn—stopped before the apartment building.

The dining-room remained dark, and the detective chafed as he waited outside in the cold. Presently the front door opened, and the Countess—she wore a shapeless dark cloak and small hat, but Leatherwood knew her by her height—came out, helping a figure who was held up by the man. He had his arm behind the figure's head, and they all stepped slowly and silently across the sidewalk, where the invalid was lifted into the car.

At a signal from Leatherwood, the waiting servant followed the gray car, and the detective with a satisfied air fitted his skeleton key into the door and entered number two.

A short time later he came out and went to the next entrance, where he found the elevator boy talking with the doorman.

"I am looking for the maid who is with the family in number two," he said, allowing his veil to fall over his face and speaking very low.

The boy grinned. "Miss Le Roy has just gone home," he replied, pocketing a piece of silver. "Sorry; any message?"

"Ninette Le Roy? Are you sure?"

"Yes, ma'am. I saw her. She'll be back by ten tomorrow morning."

"Ah, she goes home nights, then?"

"Yes, and I guess she's glad of it, for she's always getting scolded for something. She says her mistress must be of royal blood, she's so ugly."

The doorman joined in the wide smile of democracy that flooded the freckled face of the boy, and with a murmur of thanks the woman in black moved away.

Clarke Leatherwood returned to number two and got busy at the phone.

"Am I speaking to Mr. Abernathy?" he said after a time. His eyes surveyed the gay telephone doll as though he were speaking to her, and when he got an affirmative answer he went on.

"Oh, yes, I'm getting along very well . . . no, I cannot hurry things up. It all takes time, and . . . where am I? At the apartment of the Countess. Goodby." He looked pleased as he cut off the volley of impatient words.

In a few minutes the telephone rang, and Leatherwood's man, Tom, spoke cautiously over the wire.

"Yes, it's all right, at the dock. If you call again ask for Ninette Le Roy. Send James back here with the car."

He rang again and called up Doctor Anderson.

"Can you come at once? It's Leatherwood—number seventy-five Drexel, apartment two. If I do not open the door ask for Mrs. Johnson and vanish. Get me? Thanks, old man."

Doctor Anderson had come and the detective's car had arrived and the sumptuous apartment was empty when the Countess returned late in the night. Her rose-tinted face was white and drawn, and her hand shook as she inserted her latchkey.

"This has been a terrible night," she murmured, throwing her cloak down upon the couch in the dining-room. "Mix me a cocktail."

The man with the scarred face obeyed silently. He, too, looked tired and shaken.

"Those dead faces, ugh! Never before have I met such a man."

"You don't often find one who can withstand you, my lady."

His taunting tone caused her full scarlet lips to tighten, and she shot him a baleful glance.

"You've never been able to, at any rate," she retorted, and he nodded to her over the rim of his glass.

"You are going to belong to me when we're through with this business; naturally I don't care to have you give any favors to other men, even to pretend to care——" His ugly dark face was filled with intense earnestness, and the white-faced woman watching him wondered what he would do if he knew how little pretense had been needed to stimulate her recent campaign.

"But the risk is always amusing," she told herself as she met the blaze in his eyes. "I could not do it alone, and if he gets too troublesome when the goal is won—pouf!" she flicked the ashes from her gold-tipped cigarette recklessly. "The lessons learned to-night will perhaps stand me in good stead, my dear Carlo."

"At least we can draw a breath of safety. All day I have feared the police would come, although the hiding place was so very obvious that they'd scarcely spend the time to search here. Every one knows your blue car, and the beautiful Countess is the topic of conversation in this apartment house. I hear much of the gossip from the maid who does my suite——" He broke off suggestively, hoping she might display some jealousy, but her great blue eyes regarded him tranquilly. Great lady that she was, a vulgar intrigue with a housemaid did not apparently even interest her. She was mondaine to the tips of her finger-nails. Secure in her undoubted supremacy, she merely allowed a fleeting smile of amusement to curve her soft rose-red lips. Annoyed, he continued: "Ninette tells every one how you scold her and even swear at her."

"But yes, why not? She is of the canaille. She must bear with moods," said the lady evenly.

"We all bear with them, but we must, for it is you who

has the brains to——" He broke off. "Did you hear anything then?"

"No," she laughed. "Your nerve is breaking. It is well we are so near the end. In a few hours the papers will be out, and we shall read the surmises of the fools. The Abernathys have done all they could to hush up the affair; it is not a pleasant thing to have one's daughter jilted at the very altar. I predict a 'run on the bank' to-morrow. The people are already drawing out freely as a result of the end of the war and the holiday season, and I have started a few subtle rumors of 'errors in accounts' that will cause the cautious ones to transfer their accounts elsewhere."

Again there was silence in the brightly lighted room. The Countess, still in the plain black frock she had worn under her concealing cloak, looked like some exotic flower wrapped in a dingy covering; even the rich furnishings of the room seemed tawdry when one feasted upon her transparent skin which was flawless even in strong sunlight. The wealth of hair that had astonished the detective was heaped high upon her regal head with a careless artistry that brought out the clear-cut daintiness of her classic features and made a frame for her great eyes blue as sapphires. The visitor watching her from half-closed eyes decided that there was no one else just like her; some women were lovely but merely dolls—others were brainy with unpleasantly bulged foreheads and sparse eyelashes—and she would be his—his—or——

"Don't look so ugly, Carlo; you will terrify me," teased his companion, dropping her silky lashes until they rested, a fringe of black, upon her dimpled cheek.

"Tell me exactly what happened. I have to send in my report in the morning."

"Well, you know about my numerous visits to the bank. Usually I don't have much trouble with men"—a slow smile curved her lips and the man scowled. "The man at the desk in the safety deposit vault absolutely refused me. 'It is a joint arrangement, and the other signer will have to appear personally,' he insisted."

"He wouldn't accept the absentee's signature?"

"He would not. After an argument he finally said it was up to the president; if he would give the order that would be all right."

"But the president was slow in giving the order."

"Slow? He simply laughed at the idea. The vaults were a sacred trust, and all that sort of thing. He said he would as soon think of forging as to allow a box to be unlawfully opened."

"The personal element did not seem to count for much with him," taunted the man.

"He had his head filled with that doll he was engaged to, and she—why, she would forget him in a month, whereas——" She bit her lip, but Carlo did not notice her slip—he was thinking of the order.

"It was certainly a good idea on your part abducting him on his wedding night; he fell into your lap easily enough."

"A man hates to refuse a woman anything, and when I told him I was in the deepest trouble and only wanted a few minutes' time with him he could scarcely say no."

"Was he surprised when you brought him here?"

"No. I said it would only take five minutes to drive here, and he could straighten the affair for me. When we came in I tried to coax him into signing the order, but he merely laughed at me. Those big handsome men are hard to move when they've once made up their minds."

"And then?" prodded her listener.

Her mouth curled upwards in a piqued smile. There had been some very pretty vamping on her part that had ended fruitlessly—he had only risen to go, and the set of his mouth had told her that she had fooled him to the limit, she could not possibly detain him further.

"I poured out a glass of champagne for him and asked him to join in a toast to his bride. Again it was a thing he could scarcely refuse. In his hurry he fairly gulped it down, and then——"

The cruel dark eyes glistened with enjoyment. "Then the drug worked?"

"Of course. And still works." She leaned back smiling at the recollection.

"Did the writing expert get the forgery finished?"

"Yes, I have the note giving me permission to inspect and remove anything I see fit from the joint safety deposit box; I shall present it to-morrow morning, and by noon all will be over."

The detective listened serenely outside; he had taken the precaution of opening the window a crack so that he heard everything perfectly.

"She is some woman," he thought. With the shadowing done by his man Tom and his own work he had a pretty clear picture of the night's work, and to think of the scenes she had been through and to look at her now lazily blowing smoke rings while in the next room——

A tap on his shoulder brought him back to his position as an eavesdropper.

"Come along with me," growled a rough voice. "First-story man, I suppose."

He stepped down and showed the policeman his star and whispered his name. "I'll have something to give the central office to-morrow or next day," he promised, and the man, after a sharp look at his face, let go; he knew that queer looking nose very well. The feature that made disguises hard had done Leatherwood a good turn for once.

Leatherwood returned to his crouching position on the window ledge, and was in time to hear Carlo say he would look in on the next room before he left.

"If you wish," agreed his hostess, and rose to lead the way.

The detective raised the window noiselessly and entered the dining room. Standing in the shadow of the heavy curtains, he heard a sharp exclamation from the Countess, followed by a curse from the man. Something in the carefully-planned scheme had quite evidently gone wrong, and the man lurking in the shadows smiled, well pleased.

In the beautiful home of the Abernathys Jean was spending a sleepless night.

"Why has such a thing happened to me?" she wailed, turning her hot pillow over to cool her cheeks; the crisp winter air blew in across the bed, but she burned with fever.

The day following the postponed wedding had been filled to overflowing with curious-eyed visitors. Come apparently to condole, they had remained to spy out her heart's secret—to discover why the bridegroom had vanished at the eleventh hour while his bride waited patiently at the very altar—almost.

"Perhaps he was jealous of that adorably handsome Cecil who seemed so unhappy over your engagement," suggested one of the bridesmaids, wondering what Cecil or Philip could have seen in the heavy-eyed little creature who listened silently and with a patient politeness that would have been pitiful to any one possessing hearts or sympathetic understanding. The society girls watched her with bright speculative eyes—in the world of money and position one must be constantly on the alert to retain what has already been won and be ever on the outlook for new honors.

"Mother, must I see any one else?" cried little Jean when there was a momentary absence of guests.

"You don't want people to think you are grieving over an unworthy man, my dear——"

"Philip is not unworthy. I believe he has been killed!"

"I received this letter half an hour ago. It was brought by Ninette, the maid of the Countess who——"

Jean's white cheeks were swept by a wave of crimson. "Let me see it at once!" she interrupted with an imperiousness that surprised her mother, it was as though a kitten had suddenly given an order.

She got the letter and read:

"Sorry, dear Mrs. Abernathy, but I find that a prior attachment will preclude the possibility of marriage with your highly-esteemed daughter. The evening papers will probably acquaint you with sundry details of my mad passion for the Countess, but I felt that I owed it to you and your family to apprise you of the situation in advance. PHILIP LATIMER."

The stationery bore a coronet in gold and a wave of heavy scent poured out and stifled the girl. She sat looking straight ahead in silence while the red slowly drained out of her face until it seemed to the watching mother that a mask of agony had replaced the piquant little face that had been the countenance of a child before.

"Jean, dear, say something."

The girl crushed the note in her hand; she had never known just how much she loved the handsome man whose courtly manners and frank good nature had endeared him to his friends. The world would never again look quite the same, but the blood of fighting ancestors came to her rescue.

"Mother, dear, isn't it time we were dressing for the concert? I should be sorry to be late, for there are some pretty good solos."

And so ended Jean's engagement.

At the bank there would have been no surprise at the president's absence as they supposed he had gone on his wedding trip. But the reporters had given in the story of the postponed wedding, and the morning papers had big headlines telling of the unaccountable absence of the bridegroom—of the waiting throng in the great cathedral—of the twelve bridesmaids who had returned to their homes.

And there had been a hurried meeting of the directors, who had argued and talked to no purpose. The ten o'clock mail brought a brief note from the president saying he had changed his plans and would return in a few days to his duties at the bank.

"I don't see that there is anything for us to worry about," remarked the vice-president, who hated work of any kind. "Latimer will be back as usual, and if he chooses to postpone his wedding he probably has some good reason for it."

The safety deposit vaults had been opened only a few minutes when the Countess, very plainly dressed, appeared and quietly handed the president's order to the gray-haired man at the desk.

He settled his glasses into place and read the order over twice. It was perfectly regular and written upon bank paper. He thought of telephoning the vice-president, but, knowing how he disliked being troubled, hesitated.

"I did as you suggested," said the friendly voice of the Countess, and her great blue eyes met his with a glance that stirred his long dormant memories of romance—a spark of youth gleamed in his faded gray eyes, and he settled his necktie consciously. "Here is the order. I wish you could go with me to open it; it holds something very dear to me."

The reminiscent smile curving her rose-red mouth dissolved his last faint scruple. After all he had the president's signature; who was he to interfere?

Inwardly quaking, but without the slightest appearance of haste, the Countess composedly walked to her box and produced her key. The fatal discovery of the night before had shaken her confidence in herself. Any moment her forgery might be discovered and her career would end ingloriously, but the watching guards lounging about with alert eyes and deceptively sleepy manner detected nothing of this, and the one nearest her turned his head to whisper something concerning the peachiness of the leisurely visitor.

Her heart beat rapidly. For three months she had been laying her plans—for many months she had hoped for the moment when she could take the slim key that opened to her a future of luxurious wealth, and more than all she would have outwitted the scheme of a man who fancied that his brain could dominate not one country but many—in fact, whose vulture-like eyes had looked covetously upon a world and who had dreamed of golden conquest. With his unerring capacity for attending personally to details, he had sent this box, or rather the contents, to this bank whose safety could be depended upon in times of greatest stress. The bank president had not spoken idly when he had said his integrity was bound up in that of the bank. He had taken a trust from the people, and he would defend that trust with his life, if need be. He had already jeopardized the love of the fiancée who had waited for him on her wedding night, and the Countess thrilled with pleasure as she thought of the cruel note she had sent to Mrs. Abernathy. She had taken a tigerish fancy to the big man who had regarded her with a businesslike impersonality that infuriated her, and he would discover that it was a futile thing to deny her when she really resolved upon getting her way.

These thoughts swept her brain in a mad song of triumph, and when her key stuck in the lock she waited a moment—playing with her victory even when she knew delay might bring disaster.

She had filled the box three months' previous; her companion had been a man who, sent from that far country, would have killed her instantly had she shown the slightest intention of neglecting one item of her ordered plan. She would have given only her own signature if that had been possible, naturally, and had indeed prepared two papers of instructions so that if she could insert the false one which gave her only access to the box, she would have had clear sailing, but the man of rank who traveled modestly under the title of Count had taken the paper from her hand and calmly slit it open and read before he gave it to the waiting man at the desk. Even now she shuddered as she remembered the moment. Had she handed him the false one she would have been a dead woman before the night had come.

But she had outwitted them all. The key turned and she pulled out the long narrow box and opened it.

There was a shriek that echoed through the vaults, and then the Countess for the first time in her life fainted.

The lounging guards sprang forward.

The box was empty.

The Countess was only unconscious for a few seconds, and she hurried to the desk. "My box has been tampered with and the contents are gone."

There was a hurried conversation, and after signing her complaint she hurried out and up a side street, where she had a taxi waiting; she had not used her own car. The man with the scarred face was inside and greeted her eagerly: "You were so long that I began to fear something had gone——"

"Keep still," she ordered sharply. "The box has been robbed!"

Paying no attention to his excited comments she sat thinking.

At the same time Mr. Abernathy was telephoning to the detective.

"Mr. Leatherwood is out on a case, but I expect to hear from him shortly," said the servant.

"But this is Mr. Abernathy. I don't expect to be kept waiting like this. Why does he not keep me informed of his movements?"

"Mr. Leatherwood has his own methods, sir, but I happen to know that he is out on your business. I'll ask him to communicate with you as soon as I hear from him," returned the man civilly.

An hour later Clarke Leatherwood's card was handed to Jean's father.

"Have you seen the papers?" Mr. Abernathy's tone was unpleasant.

The detective regarded him with a level gaze. "I have."

"Then," cried the host with a mounting excitement in his voice, "you know that Philip Latimer's body has been found—dead——"

"I have seen it," admitted Clarke.

"Well, man, what have you been doing? I hired you to find him, and you vanish and tell me nothing of what you are doing, and then he is found in the river."

"Do you wish me to drop the case?"

"A dead man is of no use to me; the bank is going to offer a reward for the murderer; perhaps you can earn that. What do I owe you?"

"I will send my bill in due time. Good day," and Leatherwood was gone.

Mr. Abernathy entered the dining-room where Jean was arranging some flowers. "I have some news for you."

Her soft dark eyes gazed up at him expectantly, and he looked away toward the window that he might not see her grief.

"Mr. Latimer has had an accident; in fact, he is dead. He has been found drowned. He was unworthy, and now be brave and let us close that chapter in your life. Would you like to go away for a time?"

The girl's small hands clenched and unclenched, and her face grew white, but she said nothing. The man's heart was sore as he looked at the brave little figure and he was filled with resentment; even if the dead man had lived she would have still had to fight out her sorrow alone, no one could help her. He said nothing, however, merely put a comforting hand upon her shoulder, and the girl did not shrink away for the two understood one another.

Then her father said:

"Shall I make arrangements to go South? There is that island in the Pacific where we went two years ago; the caretaker is living there and I can take servants from here and some of the girls for company."

Jean assented.

By six o'clock that evening the party were on their way to San Francisco. The island owned by Mr. Abernathy was a beautiful little place, half a mile wide and about a mile long. He fancied the change in the tropical sunshine and silence might give Jean a chance to adjust herself. Rather against her desires he had invited several of her friends, for his wife agreed with him that she must be amused. Therefore, it was a cheerful group of young people who chatted and giggled as they called last goodbys to their friends.

Jean's mother beamed as Cecil Gray hurried up with his valet behind with his suitcases; Jean did not know he had been asked, so she had had no chance to forbid the invitation, and, indeed, as she met his smile of greeting, she was glad to see him. The last time had been at the cathedral when she had seen him trying to appear gay and cheerful, but he had written and sent flowers to her since the interrupted marriage.

It was ten o'clock when Clarke Leatherwood called up the Abernathy mansion.

"The family has gone south for several weeks," replied the butler.

The detective shrugged his shoulders. "The old boy keeps his own counsel," he told himself. "Well, that simplifies things somewhat and I'll have more time to follow the trail of the fascinating Countess."

Philip Latimer had few relatives, and none in Chicago. He had lived at a downtown hotel, and when his only sister arrived in response to a telegram from the vice-president she found only strange faces to greet her.

"It will be better for you not to look at him," said Mrs. Deering, who had accompanied the vice-president.

"But I wish to. Don't you think there is a chance that it might not be Philip?" said Anne.

"My dear, there isn't the slightest hope of any mistake; his face is beyond recognition; he was, apparently, struck by a boat before being found in the river, but he was wearing the clothes he had put on for his wedding, his bill-fold with his name stamped inside and filled with money that his best man identified, everything made identification certain. His valet knew the underwear and even his collar was a special make that he had made to order for him. His tile was missing, that was all."

"But how did he happen to fall in the river? What is the story of some adventuress who called him away and all that?"

"That is what we are going to find out," said Mr. Deering forcefully. Philip Latimer was a man to be missed, and he proposed to find out whether or not there had been foul play, and if so he would make it his business to punish the guilty ones—that was little enough to do. He had offered a reward of five thousand dollars for proof of the murder if murder it was.

They went to headquarters.

"I think," said the chief of police, "that we are going to discover something soon. Did you know that Mr. Latimer had left a will leaving the major part of his fortune to Miss Abernathy? One of my men has made friends with a servant in the Abernathy household, and he learned that the bride was not at all enthusiastic over her approaching wedding; that she is only nineteen years old and that there is another lover, a Cecil Gray——"

"I believe I'll see the Abernathys," said Anne. "They may give me some information——"

"You cannot," said the chief significantly. "They did not even wait for the funeral. Mr. Abernathy made up a party, and they have all gone south and left no address. I understand it is some mythical island in the tropics—sounds fishy to me. Suppose they will have plenty of money now that they have Latimer's wealth to squander."

"It seems to me that you are speculating rather wildly," said Anne. "Was there anything to prevent her marrying this Cecil Gray?"

"He was not so wealthy, and the girl probably had pressure brought to bear upon her—well, they have or will have Latimer's money now."

Anne regarded the chief wearily. The death of her dearly loved younger brother had been a terrible blow to her, and the constant talk of money disgusted her. "I have Jean Abernath's photograph, and the suspicion of murder in connection with her is absurd. I will offer a further reward of ten thousand dollars for the apprehension of the murderer. You say he went away in a blue car belonging to this foreign woman?"

"Yes, the best man, Mortimer Jones, saw him, but he has gone away with the Abernathys."

"Then have your detective find this woman and search her apartment and question her friends," ordered Anne.

The chief scrutinized her curiously. She seemed to have no idea of his importance, but she must be somewhat of a personage herself to be so peremptory, and he decided to put his best man on the case, and show that Chicago was right there when it came to sleuthing.

And uptown Leatherwood smiled with satisfaction as he watched the Countess. He had done pretty well and had the tangled threads of evidence neatly tabulated in his mind. "The Countess is pretty slick," he thought. "Glad I've never mixed up much with women; they are uncertain."

A wise conclusion on his part that would have saved him considerable worry had he avoided the weaker sex, but he hung on to the Countess grimly, for her capture was going to give him a pretty publicity and annoy the chief, who thought no one outside had a right to any praise.

All day the snow had fallen steadily, and the dirt and grime of the windy city was covered with a shining softness that would have enraptured an artist and delighted a poet. Leatherwood, however, being neither an artist nor a poet, was becoming decidedly cold and swore quietly as the slush went above his shoetops. The warmth from the building on Drexel Boulevard melted the snow, and he strolled around to the front entrance, wondering if the dimness of late afternoon coupled with the snow would offer a sufficient concealment for him.

He had been watching the Countess as she sat before her writing desk, where she paused in her writing to send an occasional glance at her face in the mirror opposite her. She was very good to look at and seemed rather well aware of it.

A slim hand tapped imperatively upon the big window that lighted the living room. The detective glanced up casually and saw the blonde head of the Countess between the partially drawn back lace curtains.

He waited an instant and lifted his hat, whereupon she smiled and motioned towards her front door.

"Pardon my unceremonious greeting, Mr. Stone," she began as she held the door open for him to enter. "I was about to telephone you when I saw you outside. Simple methods are often the wisest, don't you think?"

He bowed noncommitally.

"You see, I want to employ a detective, and being a stranger here thought that you might advise me——" She paused effectively, and her dusky lash swept her cheeks. "Now whom would you advise? Being the superintendent of the building, I am imposing upon your good nature, you see. Did any one ever ask you before for a detective?"

"It is usually hot water or more heat," he admitted, "but I am always at your service. I am not, however, Mr. Stone," he addded casually, wondering what her game was.

She started and cast a swift glance behind her. "What have I done? You look exactly like the manager of this building, and here I've called a strange man in here and——" Her already low voice trailed into an apprehensive silence, and the man studying her in the dusk wondered at her ingenuousness. The fading light of the winter's day rested upon her head, and her thick, golden hair took on an opaque richness as of heavily beaten copper. The great blue eyes were dark with some horror that evidently threatened her, and he wondered if the memory of the river scene ever awoke her at night.

"I am sorry that I am not Mr. Stone. I would be most happy to serve you."

"Do you happen to know of a good detective? My life is in danger."

The room was silent, then from the apartment above came music. A few vibrating chords, then the words of a song the man had heard years before, "The Rosary." With a sudden whimsical amusement he yielded to the impulse that had taken possession of him and he answered slowly: "I am a detective, madam. I could not promise my assistance, but if you care to tell me anything——" He paused.

A strong relief flashed across the beautiful frightened face, and she reached back for the switch and turned on the light so that it shone strongly upon his features. "What an incredible coincidence! I am being hounded by a secret service man—death lurks in every corner. I had a safe deposit box which has been robbed, and this man pretends that he thinks I have stolen the contents and he intends to kill me and keep——"

"Keep what?" asked Leatherwood, as she stopped with a little gasp.

"Ah, that I cannot tell, but the horror of the thing is killing me. I have tried to be faithful to my country, have spent all my private fortune in carrying out orders, and now—when I thought I was about to finish triumphantly —new complications arise and I fear I shall not even escape with my life."

Although she talked so freely, the man knew that she had said nothing that might not be found out by piecing rumors together, and he again wondered what she was expecting to gain by her heroics.

"What do you wish me to do?"

"To follow this man and get proof of his villainy, so I can have him arrested. You doubtless know of the murder of Philip Latimer?" Her blue eyes shone as she looked him straight in the face.

"Yes."

"Well," she replied significantly, "a word to the wise. He has forced me to be his tool too many times; now I shall confess all I know and let the law put him where he cannot do any more harm."

Leatherwood reached for his handkerchief to stifle an impending sneeze, and he noted approvingly that she did not even appear to notice that he fumbled in his rear pocket. He felt his automatic as he drew out the handkerchief, and letting his eyes rest upon the exquisite figure before him he felt that he was a brute to even assure himself that it was still in place. She smiled slowly as she met his gaze, and he fancied that a spark of blue fire shot from the dark-lashed eyes. He did not wonder that men had fought and died for her—her sleeve had slipped back from her lovely bare arm, and he looked curiously at the black bracelet that was pushed up so tightly that the pinkish skin dimpled around it in a fascinating manner. "It is an odd thing," he reflected, half hypnotized, "that good women are so angular and sallow, so harsh as to speech."

A light footfall behind him brought him to earth, and shifting his gaze with difficulty he saw that Ninette had entered.

"Yes, bring tea and then you may go," directed her mistress without turning her head.

Leatherwood was impressed in spite of himself. This was the way great people lived. Nearly dark now and still she would expect to be served with food. She had not told her maid to put on an extra cup, yet he felt sure that this would be done. At home an unexpected guest would throw his mother into a flurry of preparation, and this woman had not even turned her mysterious eyes to make sure it was Ninette. There was something in rank after all, something very interesting——"

His musings were dispelled by the delicate tinkle of china, and he saw with surprise that something that looked like a double tray was being actually wheeled into the room by the becapped Ninette.

The Countess swept her eyes over the tea wagon. "Where are the little iced cakes?" she demanded with a greediness that delighted her guest.

"Pardon, madam," and Ninette vanished.

Five minutes later she had gone to her home, and Leatherwood found himself drinking English tea and eating some remarkably appetizing sandwiches. "Perhaps she had poisoned them," he assured himself, feeling a fatuous security that she had done nothing so crude, but the hot tea after his afternoon watch in the melting snow was strangely soothing, and he recklessly ate and held out his cup for another drink.

"So glad you like it," she said. "Americans do not know how to make tea." As she spoke she removed the fat silken cozy from the squat porcelain teapot and peered delightfully into its depths.

He was a bit disappointed that the teapot was not silver, but then she was only renting here, and, to be sure, the rest of the service was of gold with a coronet upon it; he had never before tasted such thick cream and such delicious jam. No wonder she was pretty if she lived on food like that.

"There," she smiled after she had daintily lifted the golden tongs and put three lumps of sparkling sugar in the cup which she smothered in cream before adding the clear hot tea, "that's for you, and this is for me."

With a charming air of greediness she lifted her cup and gravely selected a crinkly-edged cookie thickly iced.

Leatherwood ate on and on, and between gulps admired the cozy picture. Presently he unknotted his napkin from his waistcoat and leaned back. "I feel better now, and we can get down to business; but will you tell me why you dress up your teapot like that?"

"Merely to keep the tea warm. Women are always faddish," she replied suavely.

"Perhaps so, but always very charming." The words poured out of his mellowed lips with a smoothness that astounded the man, but he had never before had a Countess entertain him, and he was enjoying himself, and then, too, he was attending to his business. It was easier to watch her here than through the window.

"Ah, you Americans have the trick of flattery." She lowered her eyes before him, and something besides the tea warmed his waistcoat.

She arose and walked over towards the window to lower the shade and he watched her lazily. As she passed behind him a whiff of the heady perfume he had smelled on her dressing table drifted out from her lacy draperies. She paused near him, and lifted a rose from the bowl of flowers, and as she did so her slipper caught in a rug and she would have fallen had he not caught her. For a second she lay as though stunned, and he stood awkwardly holding the fragrant lacy form that looked more like some mythical fairy woman than a Chicago client. Then she stirred and allowed her great blue eyes to meet his. The bemused man stared into the mysterious depths that trembled and changed as he looked and involuntarily his clasp tightened.

Her shadowy lashes dropped swiftly and she released herself.

"Pardon, I am very clumsy. Now, will you take your note book set down the facts as I give them?"

"Yes, my lady, and I feel sure that I can do more for you than any other man in Chicago."

She smiled her thanks. "Before we begin I'd like you to see this man who"—she paused and listened—"yes, he still sleeps." She rose and led the way towards a velvet curtain. "Keep very quiet; you can just peep in and imprint his face upon your memory, so——"

Leatherwood tiptoed after her clumsily, the fragrant nearness of this exotic woman, her gracious unbending towards him had upset him and he would have stabbed the culprit had she handed him a knife and so directed. But she did nothing of the sort. Holding back the curtain prettily, she motioned toward the bed where the man was sleeping.

He peered at the bed, and at that instant something hit him on the head with a sickening crash. Thoroughly aroused from his lapse into high life, he fumbled in his rear pocket.

A closing door and darkness told him the story his pocket confirmed. He was trapped and his automatic was gone.

PART TWO.

"JEAN, what do you mean to do with Cecil?" asked Daisy.

Jean's hand was resting on the head of the puppy snuggled against her, and she looked at her friend with sleepy surprise. There was no hint in this smiling island of the snow and frozen drifts that were making Chicago people shiver and stamp on chilled feet as they pursued their various ways. Here the plumy tops of fresh green trees were dotted with bright tropical birds whose shrill cries mingled with the chatter of monkeys. Down the path which ended in the ocean one could see the golden yellow of the sand merge into the fresh tan where the waves had dashed up and receded, leaving the cool wetness over the fragile many-tinted shells that dotted the beach.

"Jean!"

"Yes, I heard you. I have no intention of doing anything with Cecil."

"Dear me, how regal! Well, if you don't want him I do, and now you can't call it poaching. I really don't see what men see in you, anyway. You are small and frail. Regina always alludes to you as skinny, but of course she's a cat."

Jean's dark eyes regarded her contemplatively. Daisy Le Clair was an amusing type if one did not feel any responsibility or love for her. She was frankly selfish and loved comfort in a feline way that maligned some well-intentioned pussies. Her cool green eyes were now narrowed to mere slits as she faced Jean. She had red hair that Rosetti would have raved over; he would have painted her as Lilith, but this youthful debutante would never have stolen a new-born infant even to plague the mother, for she abhorred little clinging things—a tiny moist baby hand that would awaken a divine gleam in Jean's soft eyes would disgust her, and she would designate it as "squirmy."

"You may have Cecil if you can get him." Little Jean's low tone was not devoid of malice.

The green eyes sparkled. "Sure of yourself; well, I'll invite you to my parties if you ask real pretty. Mrs. Cecil Gray—that will look well on my cards; do you like the shaded English type better than the Spanish?"

Her monologue was interrupted by a sudden dash on the part of the puppy, who tore down the path as though his life depended upon it. Half-way down he stopped, turned and ambled back, evidently forgetting what he had started to pursue.

Jean picked up her book and sunshade. "I'm going up to rest a while before luncheon. Will you come?"

Daisy saw a man approaching from the western part of the island and shook her red-gold curls. "No; I'll stay and watch for a stray sail."

Jean walked up the path slowly with the puppy frolicking beside her.

The absence of excitement on the island seemed to intensify her loss of Philip; she had thought that the lack of association of her personality with the tropical place would cause her to forget. It did not, however, and often when she would sight a distant sail she would find herself wondering if he would land; then the realization of his death would rush over her and the terrible details of his murder would sear her heart until she could have screamed with agony. The woman in her had awakened; in the days of her dreaming visions of the future she had faced life calmly and placidly, but the rude awakening, the letter from the foreign woman who claimed a share in her lover, then the events which followed so swiftly—the tragic finding in the icy waters of the river—all these had stirred her unbearably, and it was now a woman, in emotions if not in years, who lifted a small white face to Cecil as he met her and turned back to accompany her.

"Jean!" he cried. "It is so seldom I find you alone here; I thought we'd practically be together all the time, but there is always some tiresome girl tagging you about, or Dick, who thinks he can monopolize you. He makes me tired."

His usual air of ennui vanished as he spoke, and his grave mouth relaxed into a smile.

Jean, however, had been thinking of the fascinating reserve of Philip, and was annoyed at being disturbed by the frank admiration of the forlorn Cecil. "Why don't you talk about Mortimer Jones, too? I get so tired of always hearing about monopoly or flirtation. Better go back and find Daisy. She wants you."

The adoring smile faded, and with an angry mutter Cecil turned on his heel and went down the path to the big striped umbrella where Daisy was reading. The puppy followed him and Jean called him vainly.

"Do you know?" began Daisy as Cecil dropped down upon the scarlet cushion that Jean had lately occupied, "I am reading about a man who is very much like you; grave and distinguished and with a secret sorrow——"

Daisy's green orbs sent an ingenuous look at the man's face, and she settled her frock about her childishly.

"What do you mean, 'secret sorrow'? You sound like a best seller?"

"Oh, I know what you have gone through, and I feel deeply for you. Jean is a nice sensible girl, and it's a shame that she should have been jilted at the very altar by a worthless man. To think that she could have had you—well, it's too bad, but she may stop grieving over him after a while and take up with you again. Poor boy." Her voice had become lower as she spoke, and she ended with a pathetic little break.

Cecil looked at her sharply; she was sympathetic and yet—no man likes to be told he is hankering after a girl who doesn't want him, and the very words "nice and sensible" jarred him as Daisy meant they should. Mrs. Abernathy had refused to allow Jean to wear mourning, but the girl had worn her plainest gowns and usually white or gray, and gray was not particularly becoming with her pale cheeks and dark eyes. Daisy wore a daring combination of emerald green and lavender, and the soft chiffons and smartly tucked bodice had a cosmopolitan touch that looked very chic. Her vivid green stockings were of heavy silk, and her low shoes of lavender had high heels of the same green. She was modish to her finger-tips, and her full rose-red lips primmed themselves thoughtfully as she allowed a handful of golden sand to seep through her slim fingers. Daisy wasn't beautiful; her nose was too short and entirely too tiptilted, and her forehead was very low, but her eyes were mysterious—very—and her hair was wonderful. Cecil, mere man that he was, couldn't know that the wonderful blending of that red-gold hair was due to the clever discovery of a smart State street beauty specialist who had studied the exact shade of Daisy's complexion for weeks before she had "touched up" the curly locks that were arranged in picturesque disorder.

"Well, never mind about that. Tell me about the book you're reading. What is it?"

She held up the book, which was bound in lavender and gold. "It is a beautiful story, so romantic and——"

But Cecil had read the title and author and had fallen back in a gale of laughter. "Daisy Le Clair, do you like that story? I supposed you would be devouring the latest, most modern novel of gilded life, and here I find you with this unreal romance—all cobwebs and moonlight."

"Just because I act frivolous is no reason for my inner life being worthless," remarked Daisy with a hurt uptilting of her flaming head. She secretly despised the book and feasted upon a rather different class of literature at home, but she knew Cecil.

"I beg your pardon." Cecil looked at the averted face and noted the odd light eyelashes which fringed her queer eyes. "I don't know why I should have supposed you cared nothing for romance—it must be because you are so up-to-date and well informed."

Daisy's eyes dwelt upon the distant sky, and when she turned to him he saw that they were soft with tears perilously near. She said nothing and he felt that he had been brusque.

"Tell me about your last fight," she said, evidently trying to turn the subject, and Cecil plunged into a vivid account of the world-famed battle of the Marne.

Jean's short manner coupled with Daisy's ingenuous unfolding of the romantic child-faiths concealed beneath her sophisticated manner caused Cecil to take an interest in the debutante, and they became rather good friends. Jean noticed this with a growing resentment. It was one thing for her to refuse Cecil Gray, and quite another thing for him to tag about after Daisy, who had developed a surprising pose lately. She wore frocks of fabulous cost but of apparent simplicity that gave her a cherubic appearance and of very youthful lines. One of soft white lace with a big blue sash was especially admired by Cecil.

"Wonder why the girls don't go in more for simple things like that, with—er—muslin and blue ribbons; there is some sense in a frock like that; if you should get it wet I suppose it could be tubbed and be as good as new?"

Daisy nodded sweetly.

"I suppose it is because Jean is so—er—sensible that she wears such ugly dresses. Wish I liked tailored shirtwaists and linen skirts," she said pensively.

Cecil had no idea that "dresses" was an obsolete description of the modern woman, but it disturbed him, and Jean did not appear so alluring to him when she appeared at luncheon in a gray blouse and dark skirt. He had done a good deal of painting before his service abroad, and he loved to see harmonious colors.

One morning after returning from his early morning dip he came upon Daisy sitting in a picturesque heap with her feet tucked under, tailor-fashion, scribbling away furiously in a book with covers of limp white leather. She was so absorbed that she did not see him until he was almost upon her.

"Dear me, you startled me," she said confusedly, trying to hide her book under her blue sweater.

"What are you writing?"

"Nothing for you to see," she flared, her cheeks pinkening.

Probably it was the tang of the ocean breeze and his tussle with the waves. Anyhow, Cecil felt that he would see. They were good friends, and he had confided many

things to the rather silent girl whose green eyes had revealed her liking for him. Dropping his bath towels, he made a grab for the book. She resisted stoutly, and they were tugging silently and with great energy when Jean came around the corner of the tall pinkish rock which had hidden them.

Cecil looked very well in his bathing suit, and beside the blue and white Daisy with her red-gold curls he looked stunning as his black head touched hers in their scramble.

"Good morning," she said.

Daisy blushed very creditably (she had learned the trick at boarding school), and Cecil became suddenly aware of his dripping suit.

A sudden constraint fell upon the group, then Jean pursued her way.

"Well, if you won't show me I'd better be getting on," said Cecil.

Daisy saw that he meant to follow Jean, so she shyly produced her book. "You wouldn't be interested in my work, would you?" Cecil sent a regretful glance after Jean as she splashed into the ocean. He had not expected to have to rave over some amateur outpourings.

He stood beside her with his wet suit clinging uncomfortably while she explained the plot and different situations in her short story, and to him it seemed that he had listened to the skeleton of a novel when the puppy took his attention by biting at his bare feet and barking.

"Never mind the dog," said Daisy, looking up with absorbed eyes, "what do you think of this?"

But the embryo author was horrified to see her audience running down the beach. Some distance from the shore he could see Jean's small dark head on the glittering blue water, and he heard her cries. If it had not been for the puppy he would not have known. Near her head he saw something white that made his blood congeal, and looking back he yelled: "Send the men with a boat—sharks!"

With an encouraging call to Jean he dashed in and swam swiftly toward the girl; shaking the water out of his eyes he marked the place where she was, and going under he made his way through the water and rose with a terrific splash near her and caught her. The shark circling near dashed at him and caught his arm. The blood spurted out, and Jean, treading water, pulled with all her strength, but they were making little headway when the rowboat of the island shot out with Mortimer Jones, Dick, Mr. Abernathy and one of the men servants; they had knives and Jones had caught up his shotgun as he ran. That finished the shark, and a second shot caught the mate, who was waiting near by.

Jean was uninjured, but Cecil fainted from loss of blood as he was lifted into the boat, his arm still tightly clasped about Jean.

Daisy ran to meet them, but after one look she, too, fainted. Cecil's arm had been torn away from the shoulder, and Jean was dripping with his blood. It was only by the greatest miracle that he had not been killed. After Cecil had been carried up to the house and cared for the men towed the shark in. Mr. Abernathy found that the shark belonged to the man-eating family; an isurid. The "Carcharodon carcharias" was white and nearly forty feet long. The skin was removed and cured and made a beautiful soft piece of shagreen which Cecil would doubtless cherish when he was able to appreciate such things. The electric launch had been sent to the mainland for a doctor, and when he arrived the sailor also had a bunch of mail for the island.

Cecil was very ill all night, and most of the time delerious. Jean insisted upon nursing him, and as she was an excellent nurse her mother permitted her to relieve the trained nurse who had accompanied the physician.

Jean's maid was a colored woman who had been her mammy when she was an infant, and when the wounded man had been carried to his room Lucy threw herself upon Jean, sobbing frantically.

"But, Lucy, don't you see Miss Jean is all right? There is nothing to cry about now." Daisy's tone was rather thin, for she felt that Jean was too much the center of attention; no one praised her for running herself faint to call the men who had rescued them.

"Ya-as, ma'am, I see dat ma lil' chile is saved. Ma lil' white chile dat I tak care of, and ef I'd only known she liked dat artist man, Masr Cecil, I'd have put a charm on him too, and now he's done gone and lost his arm." The fat figure shook with sobs and her hearers were puzzled.

"What charm, Lucy?" asked Jean wearily.

Lucy arose from the floor where she had been cuddling Jean's sandaled feet. "See?" she deftly inserted a brown finger in the neck of Jean's bathing suit and picked at something sewed in. Presently the threads gave way, and she held up an object triumphantly. It was a tiny green figure, not more than half an inch long, a little jade god and hideously ugly. "That came from Ceylon, and has been worn by many a pearl diver."

Daisy laughed skeptically. "What do you know about Ceylon and pearl divers, Lucy?"

The old woman shot a sullen glance at her questioner.

"I remember," Jean came to the rescue. "Father was much interested in the mountain 'Adam Peak' when he was in Ceylon and he brought mammy some curios when he came back."

"Yes, and it saved you-all, too," finished the nurse.

Cecil had plenty of time to think while recovering, and he found that instead of a dawning affection for Daisy which he had done his best to cultivate, he had room only for Jean in his heart. He felt that he had had an unusual piece of luck in saving Jean, but he did not at all presume upon the fact. The somewhat selfish young bachelor had developed many new qualities through his love for Jean, and even the loss of his arm did not sadden him as much as the knowledge that her heart was buried in the newly-made grave.

"Who do you wish to read to you to-day?" asked Jean from the doorway.

His face lighted up at her appearance. "I was so afraid you would go out sailing," he said.

"Then you want Daisy, I suppose. She is a reader, you know," teased Jean, retreating.

"No, no, wait." Cecil endangered his bandages with his energy, and the nurse rose disapprovingly.

"All right," capitulated Jean. "I've brought a real thriller, nothing high-brow."

"That the stuff; nurse, you may take a walk or something."

The stiff linen skirts switched out with a disparaging glance at Jean's quiet little face. "Wonder what he sees in her. I like some color myself," she thought, and paused to settle her cap more becomingly before a mirror. The ruddy face under the tarleton cap did not lack for color. She had been pleased when her call came to nurse the popular bachelor, but she found that dreams were unsubstantial stuff and that the dark eyes of Cecil dwelt only upon Jean. When she was out of sight they had a peculiar quality of looking inward as though he withdrew his power of vision into his mind. He was always even tempered, but remote. She had watched Daisy's attentions critically. "That girls knows what she is doing," she reflected. "She'll get him, too."

This was also Daisy's opinion, and Cecil had come to the

point where he believed it would be easier to be captured than to parry the attack. There was no reason why he should not marry Daisy Le Clair. She was of good family and undoubtedly clever and yet—if only Jean could forget.

"Who do you think stole the jewels?"

Cecil regarded her, startled. "What jewels?"

"I knew you weren't listening." She closed the book composedly. "Why didn't you say you'd rather talk. So would I. I think real life is more interesting. Do you suppose you could paint that shark?"

"I could, yes," he said with an eager tone in his voice that touched her. He had been so silent and thoughtful that she had been full of remorse over her share in the tragedy. It was hard at twenty-six to be laid aside—a one-armed man. The war had treated him better than that and it was through her.

"It is such a mercy that the shark ate your left arm," she went on, trying to speak lightly, but he saw that her sweet dark eyes were wet with the tears she would not allow to fall. "I was thinking that you and Daisy might have stepped out of a Sorolla painting that morning on the beach; the scarlet in your bathing suit made just the vivid flash that was required against the intense blue of the sky that melted into green where the ocean met the—what's the matter?" The sudden adoration of his face almost frightened her. "I suppose you think me silly, but I love color."

"Jean, I can make a wonderful picture out of that. I know I can. You paint the words. I can see it all." He closed his eyes, and Jean looked sorrowfully at his pale face, which was more noticeable when the ardent eyes did not hold her own. "The white of the shark and the black spot of your bathing suit all shiny where the sun caught it—satin, isn't it?"

She nodded. "Go on."

"I believe I'll sketch the outlines. I have some charcoal in my suitcase and a pad of drawing paper."

The tinkle of glasses interrupted, and the nurse entered with his medicine.

"I'll go up and get your materials, Cecil," and before he could protest at such unwarranted errand running Jean had vanished.

With the drawing materials in her hand she stood looking out at the ocean. To-day it was a sullen gray with white-tipped waves that recalled the cruel white of the shark. Life seemed a weary thing to the girl. The persistent memory of the Countess smirched her ideal of Philip. She felt that he had been true, and yet—he had gone at the very moment, almost, of their wedding, and the woman's note of triumph! How unnecessarily cruel she had been! A beautiful blonde, Mortimer Jones had said, just her opposite. That was one thing about Cecil, he was always the same and always loved her. A chat she had had with her father recurred to her. "I know you have felt your trouble keenly, Jean," he had said, "but Cecil has wanted you for a long time—and he did a good deal for you, little one."

He had said no more, but his words lingered. A good deal. Yes, one's arm is a good deal, and she had come out without a scratch.

She opened the library door and nodded to the nurse, who came out.

"Give these to Mr. Gray, please."

Catching up a scarf from the veranda she ran down to the beach. There was the place where one could think out of the sound of disturbing voices. The sailing party had returned, and were filling the place with gay chatter that jarred her.

She had hardly settled herself beside her favorite rock when Mortimer Jones joined her.

"One can never find you alone nowadays," he began.

Her lips smiled a welcome, but her eyes remained grave; being a hostess involved disregard of one's moods.

"Now, see here, Jean. I'm not an artist or anything fancy, and I might as well use plain words, for I don't know any other."

She made a gesture of rebuff, but he paid no attention.

"While Philip was rushing you I never butted in, did I?"

"No, Mortimer, but——"

"All right. He won you, and I stood aside—he was the better man; but now he's dead, and I'm not going to stand aside forever—why should I? I love you, Jean; will you marry me?"

The girl had been trying to stop him; her own heart was too sore to wish to have her friend hurt needlessly, but she might as well have tried to stop the waves tumbling. The short, thick-set figure stood sturdily before her, his small, pleasant gray eyes met her own earnestly, and, as usual when excited, his well-brushed blond hair ruffled out in what would have been curls had it not been clipped so closely. Jean liked his hair. It invariably gave women the sensation of wishing to smooth it, and Mortimer had a habit of thrusting his hand through it which augmented the stand-up effect.

"I'm sorry, Mortimer," she said gently, turning her gaze away from him that she might not see his expression.

He closed his lips firmly for a moment and watched a sea-gull circle above them. For years after he could not see one of those birds without remembering the moment on the beach where the sullen waves thudded angrily and a nearby monkey scolded shrilly.

"All right, Jean, you know, but—I suppose it's Cecil. Why couldn't I have had the luck of being near that morning?"

Jean was saved from answering by the approach of her mother, who was waving vigorously.

"Your father wants you, Jean," she called when near enough to make her voice heard above the waves.

Jean found her father very much excited. A plain-clothes man had been sent by the chief from Chicago with an official request that Mr. Abernathy return at once to that city.

"Philip Latimer intended to provide so well for your future, he had no idea of the trouble that will was going to cause you; do you wish to refuse the money, Jean? I suppose you do."

"Indeed, I did not," said Jean unexpectedly. "Philip wished me to have it, and the thoughts of other people are nothing to me. When shall we start?"

"To-morrow. It is going to be very disagreeable there, but I guess there is nothing to do but go through with it."

Daisy Le Clair had learned the news almost as soon as Jean had and she managed to meet the plain-clothes man, Mr. Blair, as he walked along the beach. She pumped him as cleverly as possible and extracted a good many details.

"Poor Jean," she said, coming upon Cecil sketching in his picture. "She is surely unlucky."

"Why?" Cecil was engrossed with his subject and only lent scant attention.

"Don't you know that she is summoned back to Chicago with her father. They may be arrested for murder. Philip Latimer left his whole fortune to her unconditionally, and the chief thinks it looks strange. No one knew, really knew, that he went away with that Countess. Mortimer Jones thought he did, but what reason would she have for abducting him, or murdering him? He would have been

more valuable to her alive, for it just gave all the money to Jean. And such a clever stroke to have him disappear with the bishop and all the guests waiting; made a martyr of her so that no one would connect her with——"

Cecil threw down his charcoal furiously. "Say, you make me tired. You talk as though you thought Jean did have something to do with the thing. I should think you'd be ashamed to even think such things much less say them, and you call yourself her friend?" He stalked off before she could explain that she was only telling him what the reporters were hinting and that she thought they should all stick for Jean.

Dinner was rather a somber affair. The house party was breaking up with a suddenness that threw a gloom over the usual high spirits of the young people.

"One thing, Jean," grinned Mortimer Jones with a ghastly effort at cheeriness, "the boneheads really place the murder on my shoulders; they think I lied about seeing the dear abused Countess take him away."

"My detective, Clarke Leatherwood, traced Latimer to her apartment, and that was the last seen of him. Of course, the whole thing is merely newspaper notoriety, and I shall commence suit against them if I can," interrupted Mr. Abernathy, "but it does seem as though one's family should be immune from such horrible talk."

"I think we should better stop this discussion." Mrs. Abernathy's white head was held at an angle that foretold a story session later, and both Jean and her father recognized the symptoms. "Our family is and always has been above reproach, and I, for one, shall tell that chief a few truths when I see him."

Jones choked over his desert. He had seen the chief; but his hostess sat back thinking over the scathing remarks she would make.

"If you were only married, Jean, it would be better," she told the girl later as they sat in her room.

"I don't see what difference that makes."

"All the difference in the world. A girl who has been jilted not only is a butt for slander herself, but her family comes in for slights. At the clubs the women profess so much sympathy for me and all the time they are snickering amongst themselves; it is sickening. You will take Cecil later if that minx of a Daisy doesn't extract a proposal from him, and if you were only engaged now it would simplify things greatly. Then, too, your trousseau could still be utilized, and you know it cost your father more than he could afford."

"Mother, I wish I could just go away somewhere and stay where I'd never hear the word 'marry.' There will be plenty of money for you and father when Philip's estate is settled. Couldn't I go abroad for a while?"

Her mother dropped her hair brush irritably. "Sometimes I wonder, Jean, if you really have all your senses. Creep away now! No! You will have to take your place beside me and be seen constantly. You see, if I could have a splendid wedding for you now it would distract people's attention from your unfortunate affair with the bank president, but if you don't marry they will say there is certainly something wrong somewhere, and if you marry later, the papers will dig up all the old scandal and scatter hints along with your photographs."

Jean stood listening. Her bronze hair made a soft cloud about her oval cheeks, and she reminded her mother of the young Countess Potocka as the moonlight fell across her.

"I am going for a walk on the beach before I go to bed, mother. Mammy can finish the packing."

The chilly day had disappeared in a glorious sunset and the beach resembled an enchanted place as the waves rolled in under the moonlight. Far away she could see a tossing light, and she wondered where the boat was going and whether it carried a girl who was as weary of life as she. The puppy had rolled out of a deep wicker chair and tumbled clumsily about her feet.

How she missed Philip! She had thought that as the days wore on she would forget, but his big, pleasant voice rang in her ears; his sudden, flashing smile would paint itself on her memory until she felt bewildered.

"Jean, don't let me startle you."

Cecil's tone was purposely lowered as he saw Jean coming toward him. He was sitting in the rowboat drawn up on the beach.

"It would be a splendid night to go rowing," he suggested, then stopped. He had forgotten his bandages. He could not row with one arm.

Jean stopped abashed. She had been fretting over her troubles, but Cecil had a more tangible woe. How many things he would be debarred from now and all through her.

"You look mighty pretty with your hair down like that, Jean."

She sat down amongst the scarlet cushions and he perched on the side of the boat.

"Do you think, Jean, that you could forget Philip? I don't mean entirely, but enough to marry me? I shan't expect anything from you, and I'm a hound to even ask you with only one arm—but I believe I could make things easier for you, sweetheart. We could leave grimy, old Chicago at once and travel abroad, say Italy for a while, and I could paint and you could dream and read and not be bothered by any one."

She sat listening. Ten minutes before she had wished for the very life he was sketching for her. Love certainly is intuitive. He knew how restless she felt with the gossamer demands of life upon her. Nothing special, but ever tightening.

His well-cut mouth and generous lines about it, if his black eyes held weary shadows she knew she could dispel them. The girl was not conceited, but she knew how dearly the man loved her, and she longed to comfort him. Her life was spoiled, why not try to live for others. Her family would be pleased. Cecil's mother was devoted to her—she lifted a slim hand to Cecil, and he bent down with a light on his dark face that amazed her.

"Do you mean it, Jean? You will let me take you?" Even then he did not offer to touch her, but she felt him tremble.

"Cecil, you're making a poor bargain." She tried to speak lightly, to still the trembling of her lips, and her lover, convinced of the miracle, bent over her.

"What is this? A courtesy kiss?" The amazed voice belonged to Daisy, whose green stare fell angrily upon the engrossed couple.

"Courtesy kiss?" countered Jean, trying to appear self-possessed, but only succeeding in looking absurdly young with her cloud of hair billowing out about her.

"A courtesy kiss is one given grudgingly or to deceive. I was reading the other day that it is another name for a 'Judas Kiss' and——"

"Say," Cecil rose brusquely, "what are you trying to get at?"

"Well, things are so topsy-turvy, Jean here with murder-hints thrown at her, and you—oh, I'm not in the least jealous! Why should I be—only men are so easily mis——"

"I'm sure I don't think you should be jealous." Cecil's tone was biting. "When Jean is my wife I think she will still show you any attention that you may—er—deserve."

The group made a pretty picture on the sands silvered by the moonlight. Jean, small and white amongst the scarlet cushions, nearly hidden by her curly lengths of hair. Cecil standing with his one arm thrown protectingly about her, and Daisy—a modern Lilith with her burning hair dressed

high upon her scornful head. Her angry smile disclosed her small pointed teeth, and Cecil told himself that she would make a good study for a fox woman. Even the shadows under narrow-lidded eyes were green. "Ah, a real soul-kiss," she commented, "and the wedding?"

"The wedding will be in less than a week. I wonder, Daisy, if Jean will forgive you and take you for a bridesmaid?" Cecil suddenly laughed as he studied the hard, pretty face of the visitor. How silly of him to give her a thought!

But Daisy, bestowing a vicious kick upon the puppy, turned and glided swiftly away.

"And now, sweetheart, we'll go up to the house and find your father."

The chief leaned back in his swivel-chair with a sigh of content. Things were going very well, indeed. He had just finished reading the reports of his detectives on the Latimer case, and had given the reporters audience. They had listened avidly to his startling news, and he knew that the evening papers would have some news in bold-face type that would flutter the society people. Mr. Abernathy was not only suspected, but would be arrested shortly. A parlor maid who had been dismissed had given several clues that had developed nicely. Leatherwood could have told the chief that the same demure parlor-maid had also acted in that capacity for the countess, but the chief was unaware of any flaws in his carefully built-up accusation against Jean's father, and was flatly content.

A tap at the door aroused him, and he waited to light the big black cigar before he called in answer:

"Mr. Clarke Leatherwood to see you."

The chief regarded the scarlet band about his cigar a moment. "A would-be detective, I believe," he drawled loudly enough for Leatherwood to hear. "I will give him audience," he said at last. He had read a rattling good story the night before, and the phrase "give him audience" had been stored away for a suitable occasion.

Mr. Leatherwood greeted him gravely. "I have come to ask your assistance, Chief."

"Ya—as, you amateurs usually do. Anything special?"

"Something very special. Something that will cause a great sensation, and I'd like to handle it alone, but——" he paused effectively.

"But can't quite make it. I see. Well, spill out your little yarn. I haven't much time to give you."

A faint flushing of Leatherwood's unfortunate nose was the only indication he gave of suppressed emotion. "There is going to be a big bomb case tonight. I'll need thirty men to guard the different entrances of a public building in the loop——"

"What do you mean 'public'?"

"A federal building is to be blown up to draw away attention from a robbery that will be committed near. The robbery is what I'm interested in, and I'll let you have the glory of suppressing the attempt on the federal building. See?"

"Bosh! What federal building? What robbery?"

"I am handling the robbery case myself; the federal building is your job. I haven't men enough for both and——"

"Well! No! I'll not give you thirty men nor thirty cents—are you trying to teach me my business?"

"No use getting huffy, Chief. I tell you I know what I'm talking about, and I'll stake my reputation that the building will be blown up unless you stop it."

"Easy enough to stake what you haven't got. Get out. Can't waste any more time on you."

"It will be a big haul for——"

The chief whirled around to his desk and began writing.

Clarke Leatherwood regarded the hunched-over shoulders a moment and walked out.

Leatherwood had spent a strenuous time since his adventure with the countess, but he did not regret the sleepless nights, for he had accomplished more than he had dared to hope. He now went to one of the city officials to see if he could not get the desired men.

"Have to see the chief of police; he'll see to it for you."

"But he refuses; can't you give me the men?"

But he received only rebuffs and sneers, and finally gave it up.

At three o'clock in the afternoon he saw the trunks belonging to the countess taken out, and he grinned as he watched. It had been a pretty case, and he did not begrudge his hard work, nor did he count up honors with the countess. She had bested him at the tea-fight, but he had an idea that they were breaking even now. He had gone to a good deal of expense and had hired a number of trusted men for his haul, scheduled for five o'clock. At four-thirty he and a very large man stood waiting at the inside entrance to the safe deposit vaults of Latimer's bank.

"Say," said Leatherwood suddenly, "I'm going to give the chief another chance; there are sure to be lives lost if he doesn't act."

His companion nodded and the detective went to the telephone.

"No use," he said a few minutes later; "he will do nothing."

He went outside and saw that his men were posted as he had ordered, and felt in his overcoat pocket to make sure his revolvers were all right.

At ten minutes to five Leatherwood saw three men stroll up the street and pause to light their cigars in the entrance. The detective's companion, watching closely, gave an incredulous start as the match flared up in the hand of the second man. This person had removed his gloves and was evidently laboring under a heavy excitement, for his hands twitched so that he could scarcely perform the simple act; in fact, one hand fluttered down uselessly, and his companion deferentially assisted him.

"Leatherwood——"

The detective smiled. "Not a word," he whispered. "I knew before, that's why I was so certain the thing would be pulled off. Lives are nothing to him——" He broke off as a heavy roar shattered the plate glass windows—a roar that soared high above the traffic of the city, that made the clanging of cables, the yelling of teamsters, the mingled voices of the multitude a mere murmur in comparison.

As though the explosion were a signal, twenty men encircled the three loitering strangers. Leatherwood sprang towards the big central door—he knew who would be there with a swift taxi with covered lights.

A tall figure, splendid even under its disfiguring cloak, stepped out bearing a small box; the noise of falling stones, the shrieks of the wounded, made of the city street an inferno of misery, but to this dark person the pandemonium did not exist. Chicago's post-office had been blown up—lives had been lost, but she saw only her goal. She was doing as thousands of others had done in the annals of the country she served, and she obeyed her orders. She might escape with her life, and she might not. If she did not obey, she would die anyway, so she proceeded without hurry and without delay upon her path.

As she extended her free hand to open the outer door to the vault, holding between her fingers her stolen key to the vaults, Leatherwood confronted her.

"May I relieve you, Countess?" He smiled. "It is almost due, and your machine may explode too soon." Had the din been less, he could have heard the regular ticking of her harmless-looking box, but she scarcely heard him. She

was looking with strained, unbelieving eyes at the silent group that were approaching.

He took the box from her relaxed hand and plunged it into the pail of water he had in readiness, and fumbling in his overcoat pocket, he produced a pair of handcuffs.

"My friend," he smiled again for sheer happiness, "I had these bracelets made especially for you; they look somewhat like that black one you wear so prettily."

She did not answer, but he saw the fluttering of her dimpled neck as the cloak slipped back; her breath came in gasping sobs, and she shrank back apprehensively as the silent group passed her. There was an evil look from the central figure; his keen eyes rested upon her with a searching suspicion that seared her soul. He snarled something in a foreign tongue as he passed her, and a mask of fear covered her bright beauty with a thick whiteness that retained no sign of life save in the blue fire that swept from her great eyes.

The detectives did not understand the words, but the guttural tones held a menace that needed no interpreter.

She sank to her knees in a curtsey that brought her golden head almost to the marble floor, and the man, extending his foot, would have kicked her had not the detective jumped between and saved her this last indignity.

Leatherwood helped her to her feet and noticed with surprise that there was no resentment upon her face; the white mask evinced nothing but a desolate fear which was in strange contrast to her ordinary arrogant bearing. She allowed him to fasten the handcuffs and turned to accompany him when he spoke.

Leatherwood did not enjoy his triumph as keenly as he had planned. "Sorry, Countess," he said, "but the best man wins." He realized after the words were out that this was scarcely a generous thing to have said, but he was quite unused to consoling his prisoners, and the choice of words had never before bothered him.

She turned her head and the dimness that now cloaked her beautiful eyes touched him. "I have lost," she replied, and the man forgot the crimes that this quiet woman had committed, forgot that with her consent and perhaps by her aid, men lay dying in the ruins of the bombed building; forgot that she had spoiled Jean's life, and had even now been only prevented by force from plundering the bank which held the savings of thousands of people.

He led her out to the darkened taxi, where the power, turned on ready for flight, waited. "You were to escape in this?"

She nodded wearily. The chauffeur had fled in the crowd and the car was empty.

"I will use this to take you to the——"

"Cell," she finished. "I might have known Carl would run and save his skin, he's done it before." The last words were a whisper, but he heard; the man with the scar seemed to take the waiting rôles, leaving to the woman he professed to love so deeply the dangerous parts.

Leatherwood felt queerly. He was a plain, rather selfish man, who looked upon women in general as useless and extravagant members of society. Wherever he found crime he found, near by, a woman. If she did not commit the crime, it was done to gain her or for her benefit. Men rarely embezzled vast sums except to pay debts or shower gold upon some owner of a pretty face, and the debts were usually incurred for the same reason. But since he had held the perfumed weight of the countess life had seemed different. The soft pressure of the delicate laces against his sturdy waistcoat had awakened some dormant emotion. After all, women had a hard time, and in some circumstances might be eminently desirable.

He fumbled in his pocket.

She entered the taxi silently, and stumbled as her shackled hands tried to steady themselves against the door.

Threading his way through the crowded loop, he swung into Michigan Boulevard. She said nothing, and when they had left the brilliantly lighted downtown district, he went into first, second, third speed and back into neutral, and the car shot forward swiftly.

At the quiet side street where he lived in his old-fashioned house with its red bricks and white stone steps, he stopped; he wanted to have a chat with her before turning her over to the authorities.

Tom was watching, and the front door opened as they ascended the steps. Leatherwood ushered the countess into his shabby study and poked the fire up into a blaze; no need of having her chilly.

"Now I will take your confession before the chief gets after you. Will you tell me who you are working for?"

She lifted a manacled hand to throw back her veil; it was a cobwebby affair, but seemed to stifle her.

He assisted her clumsily. "I'll take off the bracelets while you rest," he conceded, regarding her with a remorse that he could not account for. Her stillness, too, mystified him; most women went into hysterics and wept all over the place. Taking the little key, he unlocked the handcuffs and dropped them on the table. Her soft, white wrists were reddened, but she did not even glance at them. Her great blue eyes rested upon the man's face unwaveringly, but he had the uneasy suspicion that she did not see him.

"Well, who is the man who tried to kick you?"

A shamed red flickered in her white cheeks. "I shall not tell you. I have failed miserably; you have foiled me at any turn—at least leave my loyalty. How did you discover about tonight?"

He waved a pudgy hand, his prisoner was questioning him. "I know who he is, incredible as it seems, and I know what he wanted to get, but why, if you are so loyal to him, did you try to get the box alone?"

"I was told that he was dead, that the operation on his ear had terminated fatally, and as I had taken all the risks, I felt that I was entitled to——" She broke off and he smiled.

"I see. Was it you who bombed the post-office?"

She remained silent.

"You are certainly loyal," he burst out admiringly, for he knew whose dastardly hand had committed the crime. "I wish I could have met you sooner. With a woman like you I could accomplish miracles—would—that is——"

Outside the wind whirled madly, rattling the windows, and frozen snow dashed against the panes with an indescribably bleak sound. A coal dropped in the grate and the countess studied the face before her. In the past few years there had been one man only whom she had desired to attract for personal reasons, and with him she had failed. His keen, generous mind had pierced her schemes unerringly, and he had refused to believe her interest genuine. The face that had charmed the gay European court had meant nothing to him. And now—Leatherwood stood blushing and hesitating before her. A peephole of freedom faced her through the curtain of depression that had enveloped her future. Should she snatch it? She was tempted, and yet there was something in the honest face before her that shamed her. He was plain and stodgy, but he had a simple dignity that she could not fail to grasp. If she accepted freedom he would expect to circle the years to come with the golden badge of wifehood. The idea brought a sparkle of mirth to her fathomless eyes—she a bourgeois housewife concerning her curly golden head with the price of butter, helping her husband to track down criminals—ah, there she could be of service, but a life of service had not seemed alluring to her.

The door bell rang and there was a stir in the hall.

Leatherwood went to her. "Countess, they are here. Will you kiss me?"

A strange smile curved her rose-pink lips.

"Any promise attached?" she asked.

"None, on either side, but——"

She made no reply, but her dimples appeared and a light streamed out from the heavily-lashed eyes that intoxicated the man. Slowly approaching, he watched her adoringly, and with a cry of rapture, caught her in his arms.

Several minutes later he faced the chief in the old-fashioned parlor, where the stuffy, unaired atmosphere proclaimed its general lack of occupancy.

"Yes?"

"Yes, is that all you have to say when I've been scouring the city for you—you——" Rage stifled the insults that trembled on the fat lips.

"I gave you your chance, chief. No use yelping now. Do you know who is waiting for you at your office now?"

"No!"

"Better telephone and find out, but the credit belongs to me, remember. The reporters have been notified already," he added, as he saw the dawning protest in the masterful face. The chief didn't know what credit was in question, but he didn't see the force of giving the detective anything.

The chief was unable to get his office and danced with rage at the telephone service.

"Better get a taxi and go on down, you'll find a surprise waiting for you; I'll go with you."

While the chief sent for a taxi, Leatherwood returned to the study.

It was empty. The handcuffs were upon the table.

"Did the lady go past you, Tom?" Leatherwood faced his servant, who was standing in the hall beside the front door.

"No one has passed me."

The detective went upstairs and looked about perfunctorily. He knew he would not find her. He was not angry; in fact, he was glad she had gone; the sight of the steel upon her arms had hurt him, and he faced the ridicule that would assail him at her escape with composure. It was his business and perhaps he—his fatuous dreams were shattered by a roar from the chief, who was waiting impatiently.

And while they rode downtown another taxi speeded up to the home of the Abernathys.

The house was brilliantly lighted and the visitor wondered if there were a reception in progress, for the hall was filled with flowers and the white-gloved servant had an unfamiliar face; he knew the butler who ordinarily opened the door.

A smile crossed his lips as he found his hand searching, from force of habit, for his card. "Is Miss Abernathy at home?"

"Why——" The man's voice was surprised. "Ye—es, sir, that is——"

"Never mind the name, I'll go right in."

"But, sir, you might interrupt them." The servant tried to stop the stranger, whose tall, big figure towered over him.

The visitor wheeled about. "Interrupt what?"

"There is a wedding here tonight; it is nearly time, and——"

The guest did not stop to remove his overcoat, but strode through the hall and into the library. From the drawing rooms he heard music, a wedding march, and he ground his teeth.

Snatching up the house telephone from the table, he got Jean's maid.

"Ya—a—s, sir, the bride is just ready and——"

"Send her down to the library at once!" The tone was authoritative, and the darky recognized the quality.

"I 'spect it's your father, honey, but some one wants you in the liberry right quick; sounded like it might be a p'lice officer, honey; want me to go with yuh? I've got your little green god sewed in your lace petticoat, honey, so yuh kaint come to no——"

Jean looked weary and indifferent. "Probably it is some one about that wretched countess. I'll go down. Father gets so angry and worried at anything about the case." She spoke more to herself than to the black woman, who hung adoringly upon her words.

The bride-to-be went slowly down the stairway. She could not bring herself to wear the customary white satin and tulle of the bride, and had compromised upon a frock of golden brown chiffon velvet, whose tones harmonized exquisitely with her leaf-brown eyes and soft bronze hair. The pale pink that had left her cheeks when Philip died had not returned—a fragile whiteness dwelt in the little oval face that made Cecil wonder if he had been a brute to insist upon the early wedding. He hoped that with his love and care she would become more like her old self.

Jean's glance rested soberly upon the mass of flowers in the hall. She would have preferred a simple wedding, but her mother had insisted upon guests and the bishop. Life seemed a complex affair. One could not simply withdraw and live as one choosed, there were always other lives twisted and woven, and it seemed a churlish thing to mourn in solitude when it would pain those dearest to her. So she had put away her grief and decided to try and make up to Cecil for his long devotion—to please her family by taking her part in the world—but what a futile thing it all appeared.

The butler stood beside the library door, and as he lifted away the velvet curtain for her to pass, he forgot his careful training of stolid indifference. "Don't be frightened, miss, he's in there," he whispered huskily.

Jean's brief glance was disdainful; did her servant think she could fear an officer?

Beside the great table she saw a man standing; he was so tall that the light from the floor lamp did not touch his face, which remained in shadow. She stood against the dull green curtain and it seemed to the watching man that she was a figure of brightness in her sumptuous gown which the amber light touched into a soft goldiness.

"I am Miss Abernathy." Her voice held a tinge of uncertainty—there was an odd sensation surging over her—the ice that had inclosed her heart was breaking up into a poignant feeling that was closely allied to joy. What was there in the big figure with the shadowed eyes that touched her so strongly.

"Thank God, I am still in time," came the reply, and Philip strode forward and gathered the small bride into his embrace.

There was an inarticulate cry, and Jean's brown head rested against his shoulder.

The butler, listening assiduously at the curtain, went away with a satisfied grin; servants always liked Philip Latimer.

There came the sound of the wedding march, and Jean stirred in her lover's arms. "Philip, what shall I do? Poor Cecil."

"I am sorry," returned Philip with curt brevity. "Cecil cannot have you. This is our wedding night."

The curtains parted and Mrs. Abernathy hurried in. "Jean! What are you thinking of? Every one is waiting——"

Philip reached out over Jean's head and grasped her hand, which had remained in the air in rigid astonishment

at the scene. "I am in time for my wedding this time, you see."

"Then you are not dead——" She paused, staring.

He uttered a mirthless laugh. She stared harder at him.

"Sorry to disappoint you. It's a rather long story and perhaps you'd like to have Mrs. Abernathy hear it at the same time."

Jean nodded in a listless way.

She was too astonished to say much.

Here was a man she believed dead suddenly appearing to her very much alive, very alert, smiling, and totally unaffected by the peculiar situation.

It got on her nerves.

She could not understand it properly yet.

He was regarding her intently.

Jean, lifting her eyes to his face, noted how much thinner he had become and how deeply his eyes were sunken. He spoke, however, with his old incisiveness, and Mrs. Abernathy listened irresolutely. She was glad he was alive, and yet—how tiresome to have her plans so disarranged.

"The guests are waiting and the bishop——"

"I'll have some work for the bishop in a short time," promised Philip, "and as for the guests, let them wait——"

"Philip Latimer!" Mr. Abernathy shook hands cordially, finding that he liked the look of Philip's dependable eyes more than he had thought, "glad to know that man in the river was only an understudy."

"Did Jean lose faith in me?" asked Philip, putting his hand under her chin that he might see her eyes, which now held little dancing glints of gold in their bronze depths.

"She might well have done so, the bairn," returned her father gruffly, "but girls are queer-like." Unconsciously the old way of speaking returned, and his wife knew he was strongly moved.

"Yes, she had good cause to distrust me." The lover's voice was tender. "I'll give you the details later, but the main facts are these. When the countess telephoned me about her safe deposit box and told me she was in deep trouble, I had a hunch that she was planning some scheme to get hold of the stuff——"

"What was in that box?" interrupted Mrs. Abernathy.

Philip's big teeth shone in an amused smile. "Loot," he said briefly. "Anyway, I hurried down, for the bank is a trust that I cannot be careless about. She drove me to her apartment, and we had a—a talk——" He hesitated, and the older man divined what Philip was too modest to mention. "She wanted to drink my health. Well, I knew I was a fool to taste her stuff, but I could not well refuse to drink to my little bride"; his arm tightened about the velvet frock. "So I drank the champagne——"

"The hussie," ejaculated the mother.

"And the next thing I recall was falling asleep while some one hammered earnestly upon my head, and——"

The three pairs of eyes focussed themselves upon the close-clipped hair of their guest, and saw that there was a newly-stitched wound crossing the crown diagonally.

"Yes," Philip grinned, as soft fingers touched the ugly edges pitifully, "I was a fool and, as usual, got punished. The next thing I knew was good old Leatherwood. He had found me and taken me to his house on West Adams street, where he had doctored me up with the help of his chum, Doctor Anderson."

"But, Philip, why did you not send word, and why did you allow the countess to send that letter?"

"My dear child, I did not regain consciousness until today. I have been out of my head with the beating-up I got. Leatherwood has been hot on the trail of the countess and her friends and had no idea that you intended to marry. He thought you would not return from the island until tomorrow and——"

"Yes, I gave the item in that way to the reporters because I did not want any fuss about this wedding. No reporters are here," put in Mr. Abernathy, well pleased at his finesse, and Jean, listening, wondered if he had any idea that he had been trying to marry her to the wrong man.

"So," continued Philip, "I only waited to get a suit of my clothes from home and help at a pretty little game down at the bank——" Again he was interrupted, this time by a shriek from Jean.

"We have just had the extras! Were you near the bank at the time of the explosion at the post-office? You might have been killed."

"I was at the bank. There was a scheme to loot the safe-deposit box at the vault and the post-office was blown up to avert attention while the gang made a getaway."

"And did they succeed?"

"No. Leatherwood had everything ready and we caught them redhanded. He has the countess and the three men in jail by this time."

"Who was the man in the river?" asked Jean's father.

"The countess and her friend, Carl, alias half a dozen titles, got the corpse from the morgue and dressed him up in my clothes after marring his face. They hunted a whole night to find a man about my weight and height. They kept him hidden in her apartment till they were ready to plant him in the river, and then she forged an order to get the contents of that box; she figured that as I was legally dead, she'd have no trouble in having the order honored. She worked the man at the desk, too. I fancied she could." Here his tone became reminiscent, and Jean, watching him, visualized the beautiful face of the countess, who bent men to her will. "But," continued Philip, "I had given orders before I made my arrangements to leave on my wedding trip, for I was afraid she'd outwit me."

"What arrangements?" queried Mr. Abernathy.

"I had the box removed and an empty one substituted. You see that box was in my care, and I intended that the owner should appear in person if he wanted it. It is very valuable."

"Who is the mysterious owner of this box?" Mr. Abernathy asked a trifle absently, for his mind was whirling with the rapidly-narrated facts. Here in prosaic Chicago a man had been kidnapped on his wedding night, knocked senseless by the dissolute companion of a foreign countess, spirited away by the dauntless Leatherwood, whom he, Abernathy, in ignorance of his sterling qualities, had almost insulted. Then a dummy put in the river in the shadows of the foggy night, and the business world had been staggered by the apparent murder of the popular clubman. Then the charges against his own integrity in connection with the Latimer fortune. It was small wonder that the old man was bewildered. He blinked and tried to focuss his mind upon the next sentences.

"The owner of the box was, in a sense, a country." Mr. Abernathy's eyes opened widely at this. "The box was to be surrendered to two people upon demand—two, and I knew that one of the two had not yet appeared. The whole point was this—the man who had given the box to be held in trust by this country no longer legally existed. He had signed the document with his official titles for his country and now is—legally dead."

"I don't understand," said little Jean, knitting her brows.

Her lover smiled, her feminine ignorance of technicalities appealed to him where the business acumen of the countess had repelled him.

"One of the persons was the Countess of Branksmere, and the other one was"—he paused for a moment—"the former Emperor of Germany."

THE HAWARDE SILK ROBBERY

By CHIEF OF DETECTIVES MURPHY

PART FIRST

ONE of the most baffling cases ever brought to my observation was put in the hands of a lady detective, at that time on our force.

She was handsome of face and form, plausible of tongue, and fascinating of manner.

She was known among us as Lucilla Lynx; and a more daring or successful man huntress it has never been my lot to meet.

The case was one of robbery.

The gentleman who had been robbed was a Mr. Lupton Hawarde, who was as miserly as he was wealthy.

He was a dealer in expensive dress goods, his specialty being costly silks, ribbon, and velvets.

Piece after piece of these rich fabrics had disappeared mysteriously at different times, until he could estimate his loss at many thousand dollars.

Several of his employees had each been suspected, but the closest watching had revealed not the slightest evidence against them.

His suspicions had been finally directed toward a son of one of the porters.

This young fellow Tom Garry was not more than twenty-one years of age. His manners were frank, his countenance honest, and in every way he looked the reverse of a man who has thieving propensities.

But he was at present under the ban of grave suspicion, and his arrest might occur at any moment.

It was at this crisis that Mr. Hawarde sent for me.

"An arrest—even for circumstantial evidence, and he is proven innocent—is always more or less of a blight upon a man. I shouldn't want to do young Garry an injustice," Mr. Hawarde said.

I inquired the nature of the evidence.

"Well, the last goods were taken from the case immediately after it was opened. No one had been near it but young Garry, as far as can be learned. And this is a repetition of more than one instance. On the last occasion he left the store so hurriedly as to attract notice, and my son remarked his carrying an unusual parcel."

Mr. Hawarde's son was a genleman of twenty-eight or thirty—tall, blonde and elegant.

With his mild air and serious countenance, with the scrupulously plain and neat cloth and cut of his elegant garments, he resembled a fastidious young country parson more than anything else.

"I have advised father not to accuse anybody just yet," he said at this juncture. "I don't really think young Garry has had any hand in the matter. My advice is to wait; the thief will bring about his own exposure sooner or later."

"So you said in the beginning, Charles. Your advice has been costing me at the rate of three or four hundred dollars' worth of stolen goods per week," the old merchant remarked dryly.

"You have missed goods from the salesroom also?" said I.

"Yes; from the shelves and counters as well as from the packing-trunks and cases. A third of my best saleswomen have left me; they were afraid I might think some one of them guilty."

I had asked the question with an additional motive.

It was but a part of my investigation to learn all I could concerning his employees.

But I had also decided Lucilla Lynx was the one to unravel the mystery, and during the entire conversation I had been pondering upon a scheme which now seemed feasible.

She could secure the place of one of the saleswomen who had left, and with her tact and shrewdness it would not be long before she could discover some clew to the mysterious thief.

I had my own reasons for not mentioning my plan to Mr. Hawarde. If the father did not make objections, I felt certain the son would do so—although the latter had no interest in the business.

Charles Hawarde was but a salaried under-superintendent in the establishment; it would seem the rich old merchant was too fond of "the almighty dollar" to admit even his son as a partner to his enormous gains.

The repeated thefts from his costly stock of silks and velvets had half distracted him.

"It is these accidental losses which eat up all the profit," he said, as dolefully as if he had not a round half million invested in solid real estate and plethoric bank accounts.

I assured him I should do all in my power to bring the author of his losses to justice, and so left him.

A few hours later I had turned the case over to our keen and able lady detective.

And some time the next day she succeeded in establishing herself as a saleslady into the Hawarde store.

At that time I was engaged in an affair of pressing importance, and I did not hear anything from her until a week and something more had elapsed.

At the end of that period she called upon me to report her progress.

There had been another theft in the meantime. An entire piece of almost priceless brocaded velvet had disappeared from her own part of the counter.

"I couldn't believe my own eyes when I saw it was gone," said she, laughing. "It had just been sent down and only a moment before I was admiring its lovely color. A customer made a slight purchase, and as she turned away I noticed the velvet was gone."

"Was it a cunning exploit in shop-lifting?"

Miss Lucilla shook her head.

"The thief is a man; and one who is perfectly familiar with the order of the establishment, without a doubt."

"You think it is Garry?"

"I don't know about that. I shall soon determine the matter. I have struck the trail."

I uttered an exclamation of surprise.

She had discovered a clew!—and a true one I saw at a glance.

It was a letter unsealed and superscribed by an address, the number and street of which were in the remotest northern portion of the city.

"DEAR MIN."—I read. "Am sorry you are worrying. Was detained by business. Will be up to-morrow night. Have something nice for you—a velvet brocade. Just the color you wanted. Will bring it with me, or perhaps send with the note by messenger."

The letter was presumably in response to a telegram or telephonic message.

It had been scrawled in such evident haste, that the penmanship would have been difficult to identify even by an expert.

The paper and envelope were common white, without monogram or ornamentation of any kind.

The signature was "Hubby," and nothing more.

She had picked it up on the spot from where the rich goods had been taken.

"It may mean nothing and it may mean a great deal," I said to her.

She had left her place behind the counter in the Hawarde salesroom, and had already made her arrangements for starting to the address indicated.

I shall unfold her adventures as she related them to me afterwards.

She easily located the number. It was a small, newly-built brick cottage, environed by uninclosed lots dotted by gnarly old trees, which on one side stretched into a rudely fenced grove.

After reconnoitering leisurely, she repaired to a boarding-house in the vicinity, engaged a room, and proceeded to make herself agreeable to a very chatty landlady.

Miss Lucilla was not long in learning all which could be learned concerning the residents of the brick cottage.

They had resided there a year or more. Their names were Beryl; they were young and seemed to have plenty of money. Mr. Beryl was a lawyer and went to business down in the city.

This commonplace information was not very encouraging to our adventurous girl detective.

But she was equal to the emergency.

"Would I be likely to get dressmaking to do from this Mrs. Beryl, do you think?" she inquired.

The landlady thought it not unlikely; if she would only mention where she was boarding, she would be tolerably sure of getting almost anything she might ask.

With this cheering assurance she started to call upon Mrs. Beryl.

It was late in the afternoon—so late that the trains were already bringing business men back from the city to their more or less suburban homes.

As she went onward, she heard steps behind her. The steps ceased so abruptly that she looked back with some curiosity.

As she did so, she saw a gentlemanly dressed figure dart precipitately around a rocky knoll of ground, and so into a path which made a detour to the brick cottage.

The incident did not strike her at the time as being significant; but she recalled it later and understood its meaning.

No one responded to the summons when she rung the bell of the little brick house.

The curtains were closely drawn; everything was still; apparently the occupants were absent.

She strolled into the grove with the intention of waiting for their return.

She had no doubt she would ultimately succeed in her purpose.

If she could gain access to the house as a dressmaker, it would be comparatively easy to discover if the stolen goods had been hidden there.

She was beginning to suspect that Beryl was but the alias of the porter's handsome son.

Tom Garry was shrewd, educated and ambitious; he would certainly make a clever rogue if he had an inclination that way.

But if he was leading a double life, if it was really Garry whom she had trailed to this remote place, the case was needed, and her detective work was done.

Another day, perhaps another hour, would solve the problem.

A glance at her watch showed her that she had already spent an hour waiting for the supposably absent inmates of the cottage.

Then she recalled the incident of the gentlemanly figure vanishing behind the rocky knoll.

A sudden startling thought flashed through her brain.

"The man recognized me; and he was afraid I should recognize him. If he suspects I am on his trail, he will find means to escape me."

She resolved to go back to the house; perhaps she might be mistaken, and they would admit her after all.

She had scarcely taken a dozen steps when a man appeared at the gate opening between the grove and the grounds of the cottage.

The girl detective could not help starting as she met his look of inquiry and stern distrust.

It flashed through her brain that during her hour of waiting a trap had been prepared to thwart her.

But the man's first words struck her dumb with amazement.

"I have an unpleasant duty to perform, miss. You must come with me," he began.

He spoke firmly, but not without a certain expression of respect and regret.

"Why must I?" she demanded, with a danger flash of her indignant eyes.

"I am employed by Mr. Beryl to watch these premises. I am acting by his authority."

"Take me to Mr. Beryl."

"I cannot. The gentleman has returned to the city."

"Can I see the lady of the house?"

"It would be useless."

"Will you be good enough to explain why I must go with you and where?"

The man had been walking quietly beside her.

But his right hand had held her wrist with the grip of steel, and he was resolutely hurrying her toward a police station a few blocks away.

"You will know soon enough," he answered.

Five minutes later our girl detective was committed to the care of the sergeant of the police station.

"A suspicious person, loitering without visible motive on the Beryl premises," that functionary repeated, as he scribbled something in the book before him.

Miss Lynx stepped up to the desk and made a guarded explanation in a low voice.

"That game is a chestnut, miss. It won't work here."

"You can't detain me without a warrant," Miss Lynx exclaimed, angrily.

The sergeant made no reply, but his manner was curiously expectant, and his eyes wandered from the clock to the street as if he were impatient at some delay.

While Miss Lynx stood wrathfully silent and wondering what it all meant, an officer of the court entered and placed a message upon the desk.

"There is no mistake," he said. "The young woman is wanted as an accomplice in the theft of goods from the Hawarde silk establishment down-town."

"And I protest that the arrest is unwarranted, illegal and trumped up to thwart the ends of justice," Lucilla declared, promply.

But her protest availed her nothing.

Obviously Mr. Beryl was a power in that vicinity.

And that night our luckless young lady detective reposed in a prison cell."

PART SECOND

THE arrest of our lady detective, while trailing the suspected perpetrator of the silk robberies, somewhat complicated the case for a few days.

Of course she was released the instant she had established her identity.

But she realized that the interval would be of the utmost advantage to the residents of the brick cottage—if, indeed, the man, Beryl, was really the criminal.

"If you wait for the formalities of my release he will escape. Act for me; and ascertain if the plunder is not secreted in the house," was the message after her arrest.

I saw the wisdom of her suggestion, and acted upon it at once.

On my way up town I stopped at the Rawarde store. The old merchant had not come down yet, and his son had not put in appearance since the afternoon but one before.

Young Garry, who was employed as an extra hand in the shipping department when business was brisk, had not been there for several days.

"Where can he be found when he isn't working here?" I asked the porter.

But he was inclined to be extremely reticent concerning the habits and the resorts of the young fellow.

"He keeps his own counsel, Tom Garry, too," was all the gray-haired, rough-visaged old porter would say.

Mr. Hawarde, Sr., came in just as I was leaving the building.

"Do you know the young woman whom you have locked up is my assistant, and that she was on the point of clearing up the whole mystery?" I said to him.

The old gentleman stared.

"You will have to talk to my son about that. Charles thought there was pretty strong evidence against her; he found out she was not what she pretended to be, you see. He has taken a warrant out for young Garry also; he thought they were both implicated."

"Where can I see Mr. Hawarde, Junior?"

The old gentleman mentioned a quiet, inexpensive hotel not far away.

It seemed that the son did not occupy the same dwelling-place as his miserly parent. The fact did not surprise me, as I knew the rich old merchant lived in an obscure and anything but elegant neighborhood.

I directed my steps to the hotel.

But I failed in interviewing Charles Hawarde. He was engaged, and he had given orders that he was not to be disturbed by any one, no matter what the business might be.

"When will he be at liberty?"

"We couldn't say, sir. He is a sort of uncertain quantity. He keeps a room here, but he don't sleep here on an average once a month. We never know when he intends coming or going, when he is at liberty or when he isn't."

There was nothing for me to do but to pursue my investigations as Lucilla Lynx had enjoined.

And so, without further delay, I started for the scene of her adventures.

As I stopped before the gate of the little brick cottage I noticed that the house had a singularly deserted look.

The shutters were all closed, the front door was ajar, and there were several trunks and boxes in the hall, as if the inmates were contemplating a journey or removal.

I went up the low steps and rang loudly.

The ring was answered by a stalwart, good-looking young man, who seemed to have charge of affairs.

I was correct in judging him to be the person who had escorted our girl detective to the police-station, as I afterward learned.

"Is the gentleman of the house about?" I asked, carelessly.

"Mr. and Mrs. Beryl left for Boston early this morning."

"When will they return?"

"Not right away, I reckon. I am shutting up the house for a good spell."

At that moment an express wagon drove to the gate. He had come for the trunks and boxes.

There was one box which I had been eyeing with interest.

It was an ordinary dry goods box, large and heavy, with "glass" marked conspicuously upon every side.

As I eyed it I noticed where the top had been freshly nailed there were a number of fine, silky ravelings of various colors clinging to the rough edges of the board.

Instantly it struck me that the box might contain the stolen silks and velvets.

Without a search warrant I was scarcely justified in demanding its being opened.

For, of course, as yet there was no positive evidence of the man Beryl being other than he claimed to be.

But I resolved upon an expedient.

When I felt certain of being unobserved I snatched a chisel which had been dropped with other tools upon the floor of the hall, and with a rapid effort I pried loose a board at both ends.

The cover had been hastily nailed. The expressman and the stout young man in charge were both busy in loading a trunk upon the wagon, and my exploit had not been as difficult as might be supposed.

The box was the last to be loaded.

"Give us a lift," the stalwart young man said to me, as the two tackled the heavy box.

That was precisely what I had expected would happen.

I gave them a lift, and the instant the box rested firmly upon the wagon I jerked off the loosened board.

"You want some more nails here," I said, carelessly, as with an apparently awkward movement I pulled away a fold of woolen stuff which concealed the inner contents.

When the contents were thus exposed I could not repress an exclamation of triumph.

Lucilla Lynx had been upon the correct trail.

The box was packed tightly to the very bottom with thousands of dollars worth of the most costly silken fagris.

"You will drive your load to the police station," I said to the expressman. "I am an officer who has been put upon the track of these goods. They were stolen from the well-known Hawarde silk establishment."

With a whistle of consternation he obeyed. But he was not detained; he was allowed to dump the more important part of his load and so drive away.

After telegraphing down to Mr. Hawarde, and giving a few necessary instructions to the sergeant of the station, I went back to the cottage.

I was satisfied that the man Beryl had left something behind which would afford a clew to his identity, or at least put me on his track.

The young man in charge had been placed under arrest, and I began my inspection of the premises alone.

It was already dark, but I had no difficulty in finding a hand-lamp to aid me in my search of the different rooms.

I had gone through the entire lower part of the house, and had discovered nothing of the slightest consequence.

There was not a scrap of paper, not an article, to hint of his identity, or whereabouts.

Obviously the man Beryl had covered his tracks with the most consummate cunning.

Feeling somewhat disappointed I ascended to the chambers of the upper story.

As I went down the landing, there was a sound as if somebody were moving stealthily up the stairs behind me."

With a hand on my revolver I whirled instantly; but all was still—I saw nothing and I heard nothing.

Supposing I must have been mistaken, I turned to take up the lamp which I had placed on a bracket of the wall.

As I did so, a man, with the bound of a tiger, leaped upon me and bore me to the floor.

Had he arisen out of the floor itself he could not have appeared more suddenly and noiselessly.

Had he been some demon in the flesh he could not have fastened upon me a more murderous grip, nor one more ineffectual to resist.

I could neither make an outcry, nor release myself from the fearful clutch of his sinewy fingers about my throat.

He did not speak; all I could hear was his fierce tigerish breathing; and I could not see his face.

He had hurled me with my own face downward, and as I struggled vainly, half choked and the power of resistance each second becoming fainter, I gave myself up for a doomed detective.

At the last moment, as I felt sense and breath failing me beheath his crushing weight, there was a sharp crack of a pistol shot, and a ball whizzed between us and buried itself in the wall beyond.

At the report the man released me and with a frantic bound, disappeared through the door of the nearest chamber.

As I struggled to my feet, gasping and half blinded, I beheld Lucilla Lynx standing at the top of the staircase, her smoking weapon scarcely yet lowered.

The instant she had been given her liberty she had started back to the cottage.

She had come through the front door just as I reached the upper landing.

She was on the point of making her presence known, when she saw the man dart from a curtained window niche and leap upon me.

She had not been able to catch a glimpse of his features and she had not recognized him.

She was an unerring markswoman and she had fired to frighten him—not to kill!

But he had improved his opportunity.

"I ought to have winged him though," she said coolly, as she took the lamp and walked boldly into the chamber where he had disappeared.

The chamber was empty—the bird had flown.

An open window showed the way he had gone.

He had jumped to the sloping roof of a rear extension and probably clambered down a grape trellis, as the trellis was newly broken and the vines torn away.

"He had left some clew behind him or he would never have returned," said Lucilla.

But the closest search did not reveal an atom of added information.

If he had left a clew in the morning, he had succeeded in taking it with him or concealing it when he came back at night.

We finally locked up the house and turned to depart.

We decided to take the short cut through the grove to the L station.

The path began at a gate near the grape trellis, and we both paused to view the perilous course my assailant had taken in his precipitate flight.

I had provided myself with a flashlight, and even in its none too brilliant light we noticed that the broken woodwork was stained with blood.

Blood, too, in drops and ghastly splashes marked the path.

A closer examination disclosed the fact that a sharply-splintered slat had penetrated deep into the flesh of the wounded man.

We took up the trail of blood, and step by step traced him to a garage some five or six blocks away.

Here his cunning and caution had probably been overcome by the discomfort of his injuries and his pressing need of surgical assistance.

He had hired a car and we had no difficulty in ascertaining whither he had been driven.

We were satisfied that he could not evade capture, and concluded to defer any further action until the next day.

I was not surprised when Mr. Hawarde, Senior, presented himself in the office early the following morning.

The old merchant was delighted over the recovery of the stolen silks.

But he was none the less resolved upon the punishment of the thief.

"It is young Garry—there is no doubt about that. I should have advised your taking him into custody in the beginning," he said.

"I expect to make an arrest within the next hour," I answered.

He accompanied me to the address I had procured at the automobile garage.

It was a quiet boarding-house in a rather out-of-the-way locality.

I inquired after the comfort of the gentleman who had been brought home wounded the previous evening, and was promptly ushered to his room.

The man Beryl, the cunning silk thief, lying there unconscious, with his innocent wife and a physician beside him was none other than Charles Hawarde.

"It is best to tell you the truth, madam; he is beyond hope," the physician was saying to the distracted woman.

"What does it mean? What has happened to Charles? Why is he here?" Mr. Hawarde said, like one dazed.

"It means that Tom Garry is saved," Miss Lynx said to me in an undertone.

The girl detective had joined us when we left the office. Her surprise was not equal to mine; it seems she had suspected Charles Hawarde from the beginning.

There is no need to repeat the harrowing explanations.

The young man lived only long enough to make a full and lucid confession of his wrong-doing.

He had married, and wished to live more luxuriously than he could have done upon the stipend the miserly old merchant allowed him.

The goods which were recovered were not a tenth part of what he had actually taken and disposed of to private customers.

When his detection seemed imminent, the disgrace of the threatened exposure crazed him.

He had come back to the house to secure a pearl-handled penknife which he had left on the mantel of the chamber from which he had escaped.

The knife bore his name in gilt characters deeply engraved in the pearl, and it would have been a fatal clew, as he fully realized.

In his flight he had slipped on the sloping roof and fallen upon the trellis. The broken slat had pierced his breast; and even as he fled he knew the wound was mortal.

His young wife was wholly guiltless. She had never dreamed he was other than he claimed to be, and the disclosure of his offenses seemed incredible to her.

Garry is now the old silk merchant's traveling agent, and is on the road to honor and prosperity.

A DETECTIVE'S MISTAKE

A Serial Story

By GILBERT MACKEY

CHAPTER NINETEEN

WHILE THE LAMP HOLDS OUT TO BURN, THE VILEST SINNER MAY RETURN—THE TRUE MURDERER AT LAST.

"BRETHREN, we will now join in singing the ninety-ninth hymn, omitting the last three stanzas:

"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

From the lips of a gray-haired, mild-faced, elderly preacher fell these words—pronounced from the little pulpit of the old Chrystie street Methodist Church, upon the evening of the 9th of December, 1881.

The old church, long since deserted by its regular congregation, has, as every one knows, for many years been used as a mission by those Christian workers who seek salvation for the souls of their erring brethren and sisters who go to form a large portion of the teeming population of that most thickly-settled district to the eastward of the Bowery between Bayard street and Canal.

Here gathered together are perhaps fifty persons of both sexes, scattered among the wilderness of vacant pews, anticipating the words about to fall from the lips of that good old missionary-worker, whose sayings had, upon that rainy night, sunk so deeply into the heart of our young friend, Andy Fenn.

But where is Andy Fenn?

That is something that no one knows.

Since the night of his mysterious disappearance not the slightest trace has been discovered of the missing boy.

For weeks Detective Scudder, assisted by the entire force of the New York police, has searched for the unfortunate youth in every questionable resort between the Battery and Harlem Bridge,

In vain.

Any Fenn had as effectually disappeared as though no such person had ever been in existence at all.

Now all this search had been made privately—not a word had appeared of this most mysterious disappearance in the public prints.

Sim Scudder knew it. Maurice Barrytown knew it, of course; the unhappy youth who lay in the Tombs under sentence of death knew it, and mourned for it too.

We have also another mysterious disappearance to record.

Miss Jennie Dorris, the pretty daughter of the red-nosed keeper of the Holly Tree Inn, the unwitting cause of all the misfortunes which have occurred to the principal actors in this tale.

Since the day of the trial, she also had not been seen nor heard of by any one. Not even her father was able to say what had become of the girl.

And as the days passed rapidly, it was observed by his associates that Detective Scudder grew thin and pale.

He was nervous and moody, his movements were erratic to the last degree, his attention to business had become so slight that his superiors were seriously contemplating his discharge.

To the few who were in the confidence of the man—and they were very few—the reason was entirely plain.

He could not find Andy, try as he would. The time for the Constantine hanging was close at hand.

In spite of the clew afforded by the discovery of the dog-headed banjo, and the still more important discovery in reference to the strings, Sim Scudder had been utterly unable to advance one step further toward a full solution of the case.

Whom he suspected of the Gaylord murder no one knew, but whoever it was, the evidence he held against the person was not sufficient to save the condemned boy, or to alter the present standing of the case at all.

There was no doubt of this—Sim Scudder had laid the whole matter before the presiding judge, who saw nothing in the newly discovered evidence even sufficient to warrant him in signing an appeal to the governor for the granting of a reprieve.

Thus stood matters upon the night of the prayer-meeting in the old Chrystie street church the night of December 9th, 1881.

If nothing transpired by the next day at noon, no power on earth could save Al Constantine from being hanged.

Without a cold west wind was blowing, which served to chill the night wanderers in the streets to the heart.

It had served likewise to drive several persons into the house of God.

As the strains of a small organ pealed forth within the old church, all present joined in the well-known hymn.

Among them was observed a young and fashionably-dressed man, with a light mustache and an effeminate cast of countenance, seated quietly in a corner of one of the rear pews.

He seemed interested in the service—quite as much as any one present. He frequently bowed his head in prayer.

Directly behind him sat a woman, flashily dressed, her countenance swollen and bloated, her bleared eyes plainly showing that too assiduous devotion to the bottle had probably brought her to the pass in which she was.

Now, could Andy Fenn have been present at this prayer-meeting, he would have recognized in the young man the person through whose instrumentality he had been enticed into the power of Bowery Mag, and in the woman none other than that charming example of the feminine sex herself.

Since that night a great change had come over Mistress Mag.

Rum had got the better of her at last. She had not reformed her wicked ways—that could be seen with half an eye.

As the last strains of the hymn died away, the aged preacher rose to speak.

As in the "Midnight Missions," he briefly and kindly

pointed out to these wandering sheep the true way in which to reach the fold.

To shun all evil as sin against their Maker; to throw the past behind them, and work—work earnestly, faithfully, by night as well as by day. He urged all sinners to come forward for prayer. Suddenly the woman, Bowery Mag, staggered to her feet, and with trembling steps advanced to the altar and flung herself on her knees.

"Pray for me, then, old man," she said, in broken, husky tones. "God knows I need it, if any one does."

She was certainly a drunken sinner, a dirty sinner, a sinner altogether disgusting to the eye.

"Put her out—the woman's drunk!" cried a red-nosed man, who had been one of the most long-winded of all the brethren during the previous session of prayer.

"No, no! Brother Dorris," said the old preacher, pushing the keeper of the Holly Tree Inn aside. "This mission is for sinners; it is not conducted for any other purpose. I will pray for the sister with all my heart."

He knelt beside the woman, and taking her hand within his own, prayed fervently, not that her soul might be saved, not that she might find the Lamb, or anything of a similar sort, but simply that, erring, she might be shown her error—that sinful, she might be given strength to cast the bonds of sin away.

Then lifting her kindly, he bade her resume her seat.

Tears were in the eyes of the woman as she again seated herself behind the well-dressed youth.

The meeting proceeded.

Twice Bowery Mag leaned forward toward the stranger in the pew before her—twice she drew back and turned her head away.

"I'll do it!" she muttered, desperately. "I'll do it, if he kills me for it! I cannot see the lives of innocent young men sacrificed, that one so vile as he may live."

She leaned forward a third time, and in a hoarse whisper pronounced these words in the young man's ear:

"Jennie Dorris, would you save your lover's life? If you would, rise up quietly, and follow me.

Jennie Dorris!

What in the world does this woman mean?

The missing Jennie Dorris is nowhere near. The person whom she addresses is a young and very handsome man.

Nevertheless, the young man turns—his face is as pale as death.

"Have you repented at last?" he asks, in a husky voice. "Will you confess to me the name of the real murderer of Edson Gaylord, as I have over and over again begged you to do on my bended knees, that Alfred Constantine's life may be saved?"

"I confess nothing. I love as well as you; but that innocent blood may not be shed when it lies in my power to prevent it, place this ring upon your finger, and follow me silently to the vestibule of this church. I will then lead you to one who can tell you all. Show him the ring, bring him away from the place in which you find him, and tell him—tell him that I repent bitterly the wrong I have done him—tell him that if I enticed him to harm he also owes his rescue to one whose hard heart has softened at last—to the woman, Bowery Mag."

She slipped a curious iron ring into the hand of the youth, arose and staggered toward the vestibule of the church.

The young man silently left his seat and followed, just as the little congregation within the church again broke out into song.

* * * * * * * * *

Day had succeeded day, night had succeeded night, and still Andy Fenn remained a prisoner in that underground vault, the old sub-cellar, the storehouse of the spoils of the thieves.

How long a time had elapsed since his imprisonment the boy was unable to tell.

He had lost all account of the days and nights—daylight and darkness were all one to him.

Into that cellar no ray of sunlight by any chance forced its way.

He was as far removed from the outer world as though he had been in his grave.

He knew that he was beneath some large building in a cellar, or what seemed more probable, a sub-cellar. He knew also that the place was used as a storehouse for stolen goods, and he strongly suspected that Shampansky, the saloon-keeper, was the "fence," the receiver of the stealings of many thieves.

The man Herman was the only person he ever saw, and at his hands he received his food.

He had not been kept bound from the first night of his imprisonment. Escape being simply impossible, he was allowed to wander about the cellar as he pleased—at times he even helped the grim and silent German to move about the cases of stolen goods.

Thus the days dragged wearily on, and, added to the horrors of his imprisonment, poor Andy had in addition the ever-present knowledge that each day brought nearer that fatal day, the ninth of December, upon which Al Constantine was to be hanged.

One evening—at least Andy supposed it was evening, for the reason that Herman had just departed after bringing him a nauseous mess of sauerkraut, boiled sausages and stale lager beer—the boy was seated upon the cot within the little inner apartment, partitioned off from the rest of the store-house of stolen goods.

His thoughts turned upon his wretched condition; for the thousandth time he was racking his brain to devise means of escape.

As he sat upon the edge of the cot, shivering with the cold, for the cellar had grown more and more chilly as time had passed, the sound of voices fell faintly upon his ear, as of a congregation of people united in song.

Many times before had this distant singing been heard by the boy, and he had grown to believe that the building beneath which he was imprisoned must be nothing else than a church.

He strove to catch the sounds as they rose and fell—to unite them into something resembling a tune.

So intent was his mind upon this occupation that his ears failed to discover a nearer sound—the dull clank of the iron door through which he had been first introduced into this place.

It had been opened softly from without, admitting a man into the cellar, by whom the door was softly closed.

"I have it!" exclaimed the boy to himself. "I have it at last. It is under the old Chrystie street church that this underground den lies. Those sounds are from the nightly prayer-meeting—they are singing that good old hymn: 'While the lamp holds out to burn, the vilest sinner may return.'"

"Right, Andy Fenn," said a voice at his side. "After two months in this little hiding-place of mine, you have hit it at last. But trim up your own lamp of life, young man, for to-night it burns its last."

Andy sprung to his feet.

Out of the darkness, which was entire—for the German allowed no light—the voice proceeded.

It was a voice which he recognized now only too well.

At the same instant the rays of a flashlight were flashed upon his face, and Maurice Barrytown sprang within the little room and closed and locked the door.

No disguise concealed his features now. Andy knew him as he had known him upon his last visit—it was none other than his former friend himself!

Without further warning he sprang upon the unhappy boy, and with powerful arm flung him to the floor, snapped a pair of handcuffs about his wrists, binding his legs with powerful cords.

"There, my young meddler," he said, rising to his feet. "Now I think you are in good shape to listen to what I have to say. You know me now, I fancy, even though you were deceived before."

"I know you, Maurice, but too well. Have you no pity in your heart?"

"Not a spark, not a grain for Al Constantine. Had you minded your own business I should not have interfered with you. Do you know what day this is?"

"I do not. In this place to which you have consigned me all days are alike."

"Then I will tell you. It is the 9th of December—to-morrow Al Constantine dies!"

"For your crime, Maurice! I have studied it all out here in the darkness alone."

"You might have used your time to better advantage, but since it is my purpose to dispose of you to-night, I might as well tell you all.

"Andrew Fenn, I did murder Edson Gaylord, and this is the way it came about:

"I wanted money; Gaylord's life was insured for $50,000 for the benefit of his sister Ella, to whom I was engaged. I had conceived the idea of making away with her drunken brute of a brother some weeks before the night of our little banjo concert in Peck Slip. My way of earning a living, which gave you and other of my so-called friends so much concern, was the purchasing of stolen goods, which I concealed in this cellar, as you suspect, under the old Chrystie street church.

"A large line of valuable stolen diamonds were offered me at a price ridiculously low—$50,000 for two hours would have enabled me to put it through.

"It was chance that threw the opportunity in my way.

"I left the cabin of the Nevada in search of Al Constantine. I witnessed his quarrel with Edson Gaylord in the hack. The boy was mad with rage. He struck Ed over the head with his banjo, bit him, scratched him, and then, by a visible effort, tore himself away.

"That was my opportunity. Gaylord had drawn his deer-handled knife to stab your friend, but he was too far gone with liquor; it fell to the deck from his hand.

"Stealing around one side of the hack as Al Constantine passed around the other, I seized the knife and plunged it into his breast—the $50,000 were mine!"

With eyes starting from their sockets with horror, Andy Fenn gazed upon this monster of crime.

"And you—you would marry Ella Gaylord, and fatten on the money of her brother, murdered by your base hand! My God!—my God! And I once called you friend!"

"Not only would, but did," returned the other coolly.

"It was I who, pulling the bass string from my own banjo, placed it in his dying hand."

"And it was you who crept into my room at night, and by tearing the bass string from another banjo, brought poor Al to the gallows for your own fiendish crime?"

"Right you are. I did that very thing. And he'll be hanged for the murder too. But my schemes are in danger of discovery—my wife suspects. To-morrow I sail for Europe. I cannot sail with you alive. Andrew Fenn, say your prayers. I've come to kill you, and I'm going to do it now."

What is this fiend about to do?

Every crack and crevice of that partitioned room is stuffed with rags—a charcoal furnace is produced—he lights the coals—passes through the door—the deadly fumes of the burning charcoal gather in suffocating strength around the helpless boy!

"Help! help! help!"

Andy Fenn writhes and twists himself upon the floor of the stifling apartment.

"Help! help! help!"

His arms in their wild gyrations have struck the deadly furnace—the burning coals are scattered upon the floor!

Call louder, boy! Call louder still, if you have hope of life! The room is now in flames!

"Help! help! help!"

For the third time the cry rang out.

At the same instant frantic blows, struck evidently with an ax, are heard rained upon the door.

It totters—it falls

A young man, torn and bleeding, rushes into the burning room.

A young man!

Stay! What further mystery is this—his coat is gone, torn from his back; his shirt is ripped from the bosom up—surely no man ever carried such a form as this!

It is a girl, both young and handsome, who by main strength drags the helpless boy without the burning room!

(To be continued.)

TAKE NOTICE!

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. Here are the latest numbers:

NO.
20 THE MAGICIAN DETECTIVE, by C. F. Oursler
21 KING COBRA MYSTERY, by George Gilbert
22 THE HAUNTED CORRIDORS, by Wm. H. Osborne
23 NO MAN'S MAN, by Maxwell Smith
24 THE TREVOR PUZZLE, by T. C. Harbaugh
25 THE TRAIL OF ROSES, by Edmund Condon
26 THE HINDOO VANISHING CLUE, by Pauline C. Bouve.
27 WHO WAS GUILTY? by Beulah Poynter
28 THE EVIL EYE, by Chas. F. Oursler
29 THE THIRTEENTH DOOR, by Edith Sessions Tupper
30 THE GAME OF DETECTIVE CAREW, by L. Jerome
31 LAW-MAKER AND LAW-BREAKER, by Beulah Poynter
32 THE COUNTERFEIT HEIRESS, by Inspector John Harrigan
33 TRACKED TO CHINA, by Chief Roger O'Brien
34 AFTER THE GERMAN SPIES, by May Halsey Miller
35 THE CLUE IN THE BOX, by Alexander Douglas
36 TRAILED BY A FRENCH DETECTIVE, by Rene Renaud

NO.
37 A DROP OF INK, by Lieutenant Robert W. Warden
38 THE TEN DOCTORS, by Allan Arnold Fox
39 THE STAIN ON PAGE 61, by Chas. T. Jordan
40 A MASKED MYSTERY, by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 THE BLACK SOUL, by Beulah Poynter.
42 SANCTUARY, by William Hamilton Osborne.
43 THE MYSTERY OF THE SEVEN SHADOWS, by Charles F. Oursler.
44 THE SIGN OF THE DRAGON, by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 THE MAGIC OF DETECTIVE WOO FANG, by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 THE DECOY, by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 THE HOUSE WITH 30 STEPS, by Ralph D. Porter
48 WHEN THE CLOCK STRUCK 13, by Dr. Harry Enton
49 A PIECE OF BLOTTING PAPER, by Dorothy Weber
50 THE $200,000 MYSTERY, by Ethel Rosemon
51 THE CASE OF DOCTOR BRICE, by Mary R. P. Hatch.

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STRANGE EXPERIENCES

WHAT SPIRITS DID THIS?

HOW do you like this strange experience of mine. A bachelor with no friends or relations. I was stranded in New York and made up my mind to go to Buffalo to look for a job. Alone in my furnished room I was packing my big trunk, and had my head down in it, when some one caught me by the legs, dumped me into the trunk, and evidently closed and locked it. Anyway I lost my senses all of a sudden. When I revived I was still in the trunk, half smothered, aching all over. I pounded and yelled and was heard. Men broke open the trunk, pulled me out and to my amazement I found myself in the baggage room of the N. Y. Central, in Buffalo. A few explanations got me out of my fix, and I afterward prospered. But I never was able to clear up the mystery of who threw me into the trunk, and sent me to the very place I wanted to reach.

P. D. HUNTER.

CANINE INSTINCT

AS a boy, I lived in the country, on a farm. Toward the latter part of winter, my younger brother one day ventured upon the ice of a small pond. The ice broke under him. A stable boy's cries brought my father, who tried to save the child. Both were drowned before my dear mother's eyes who had rushed to the spot. My mother was just recovering from a severe illness.

We had a greyhound that was devoted to my brother. From the day of the tragedy the greyhound attached himself to my mother, sleeping across the door of her bedroom every night thereafter.

My grandfather had been sent for, by letter—he lived three days' journey from the farm. None knew when he would arrive. The railroad station was twelve miles from the farm. To reach the farm from the station the trip had to be made in a stage coach.

One day, something like a week after the letter had been sent, the greyhound was very restless, running back and forth as if he was going mad. Suddenly, at noon, he set off down the road at top speed. Soon the stage coach came in sight and stopped at our farm. The greyhound was seen capering around it joyfully. My grandfather alighted. The dog was with him. My mother did not know when my grandfather would arrive. How did the greyhound know?

RALPH HOWARD.

HELPED BY A FATALITY

MY strangest experience occurred when I was one of the prison guards at Sing Sing, some years ago.

A prisoner named Kelley managed by some means to escape, and plunged into the river, determined to swim away towards New York.

We guards on the parapet naturally fired on him as he struck out, but although we all were good shots, we seemed to miss him every time. He was an extraordinary swimmer.

Upon orders of the superintendent, several of us jumped in a rowboat, and started away from the prison walls. We caught sight of his cap bobbling up and down, some distance away. It was floating down the river on a very strong tide. On overtaking it, we lifted the cap from the water. There was no head under it. It had merely been a clever ruse of the fugitive to send us away from him. We tried to locate the swimmer, but to our disgust we failed to find him. An account of the escape was sent to the city, and although several days passed by no report come from the police of having picked up a prisoner in prison uniform. We believed that he was drowned, and that his body was carried out to sea by the tide. One month afterward Kelley's case was re-opened in court and we found out that Kelley was innocent. He was honorably discharged from custody. I met him afterward, and he told me that a cell-mate confided to him the name of the real criminal. He thereupon took a desperate chance of escaping in order to clear himself. Most of his trip across the river was made by swimming under water, and a friendly boatman on the New York side furnished him with a change of clothing so that his identity was not disclosed when he made his appearance in the city Fate had looked out for that innocent man, so that he might clear his name.

FREDERICK LEE PETERSON.

THE GREATEST MYSTERY OF HIS LIFE

IN the year 1908, when I was visiting some friends on a farm, I got the habit of getting out of bed early in the morning to take a good long walk on the country roads, and going through the stables to look at the horses and cattle. One morning I went into the barn, patting the horses one after another and finally I came to one of the mules. I found the animal all wet, as though she had been in the river, and she was leaning slightly forward with her nose in the feed box. I said, "Get over, Jenny." She did not move. No matter what I did, she was practically immovable. I called the farmer and told him the mule was sick. He called in a vet. and with six of us men we managed to back the mule from the stall. As we stepped away from the animal, with unbelievable speed she headed through the barn door, ran into the yard, then through barbed wire and board fences, as though they didn't exist. She kept this up for several hours, all of us trying to stop her. Finally I got my rifle and fired six shots at the mule. Every bullet took effect; with the last bullet she dropped dead. About a week later the farmer had made out of the stall that the mule was in a calf pen. Imagine our surprise when one morning we found a calf about three months old, rolled up into a ball. The calf was removed, and it became as lively as ever it was. Several months later I was taken down with typhoid fever and I have been crippled ever since. This, as I have written, is my strangest experience.

THEODORE L. LIND.

CURRENT NEWS

FEET ON SNAKE

The direct descendant of the snake made famous by Eve in the Garden of Eden was found at Brownsville, at the foot of the Blue Mountains, south of Waynesboro, Pa., the other day, when a copperhead snake with two well formed feet was killed by Ira L. Kastzel. The reptile measured 2 feet 4 inches and 3½ inches in circumference. The feet are located about six inches from the tip of the tail. The legs are 3¾ of an inch in length, while the feet are round and about twice the size of the legs, and are covered with a hard gristle. The snake has been preserved in alcohol. Many persons swarm to the home of Mr. Kastzel to see the freak.

SAVE THE WHEAT FROM MICE

The greatest wheat crop ever produced in America will soon be harvested. Grain elevators will soon become veritable treasuries which thieving rats and mice will break into if they can.

Don't feed $2.25 wheat to rats and mice, says the United States Department of Agriculture. Traps, poison and ratproof construction will stop their raids.

The arch enemies of stored grain are dampness and rodent pests—rats and mice. An elevator with a leaky roof is only a little worse than one allowing free entry to rats and mice. The present price of wheat makes a telling appeal for ratproof construction of wheat containers. Now is the time to fill rat holes with cement or cover them with sheet iron and to build new mouseproof granaries of either concrete or galvanized sheet iron.

Where rats and mice have plenty of food and are unmolested they multiply overwhelmingly. For example, in Australia during the war sacks of wheat stacked in high piles awaiting shipment became infested by mice, which riddled the sacks and destroyed a large part of the contents before preventive steps were taken. Under similar circumstances a like result would inevitably occur in this country. Where it is impracticable to provide tight containers for stored products steps should be taken immediately to trap or poison rats and mice in the general vicinity of storage buildings, and should be continued till the last bushel is disposed of.

TAKING THE STING OUT OF THE BEE

Raising bees for the stings pays an Eastern woman better than keeping them for the honey which they would produce. From these stings is secured the purest formic acid obtainable, and the customers are the manufacturing druggists of the country. During the past twenty-four years this woman has supplied one firm with 25,000 stings annually; other concerns take from 500 to 5,000 each year, making a yearly trade of 50,000 stings. To produce this number but two colonies of bees are necessary, while it would require fifty colonies to make an amount of honey equal in value to the stings.

The method of taking a sting from a bee is simple, says Popular Mechanics Monthly. The bees are first gathered in a specially arranged box, by shaking a comb on which they are working over the mouth of the box. Next, in a room with all the shades but one drawn, the box is opened. As the bees come out of the box they are attracted to the lighted window and cluster there on glass or screen. Mrs. Beekeeper picks up the insects by their heads and holding them under a magnifying glass draws the stings. For this purpose a small pair of tweezers is used. The stings are placed in a dish filled with milk sugar, which covers them with a coat that prevents decay.

Each sting contains a small amount of formic acid. This acid is used in the treatment of rheumatism by homoeopathic physicians, being administered in much reduced strength, while doctors of the regular school use it, reduced one-half, for restoring circulation in cases of paralysis, applying it externally. Formic acid was one of the first of the solid-fat acids discovered. It was originally obtained by distilling common red ants (Formica rufa), from which the name is derived.

EMOTION IN ANIMALS

Scientists assure us that the question of what it meant by consciousness in animals is one of extreme difficulty. Most of us, probably without much reflection, are willing to infer consciousness when we see any living things exhibiting behavior that in ourselves would be associated consciousness.

Some years ago an investigator placed single ce'led animals in a drop of water under a microscope. They were swimming actively when the investigator touched the surface with a redhot needle. One of the animalculæ was killed and soon a clear space was formed around the corpse. An imaginative commentator called this a case of nekrophobia, suggesting that these minute creatures feared death! Later workers showed that a dead piece of protoplasm exuded into the water some substance different from the natural reaction of living protoplasm.

Most animals shrink or struggle when they come in contact with conditions that are unfavorable, behaving precisely as we do when we are feeling discomfort or pain. In many cases, before physical pain or miscomfort can actually be felt, the higher animals show the symptoms that in our case was associated with fear.

In our own case the capacity to feel, to remember and to dread pain is associtated with the activity of the cerebral hemisphere of the brain, and if these be drugged we are unconscious. A frog whose cerebral hemisphere are destroyed, if placed in hot water, will make a sudden and violent effort to escape. We ourselves, under a light anæsthesia that inhibits unconsciousness, will struggle violently to avoid pain. It certainly seems more probable that consciousness is something that may be added to the behavior of animals, not present at all in the lowest forms, and coming in slowly and gradually as the scale of life is ascended.

The supposed fear of death is one of the most salient instances of the fashion in which we are inclined to attribute our own sensations in animals. At the zoos animals that are kept together often die, and there is no instance on record in which (except among carnivorous animals, which sometimes devour a dead companion) an animal has shown the slightest interest or apparent disturbance at the presence of its dead companion.

According to their individual disposition and habits animals react only to the immediate pains that reach them and pain would have to be severe, repeated many times and associated in the most direct way with a simple sense impression before the sense impression by itself would arouse in them shrinking or the sign of fear.

UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE OF THE INDIAN

Most of us visiting a foreign land find it difficult, and sometimes impossible, to make our most ordinary wants known. The red man has no such difficulty; the problem of a universal language was solved centuries ago by the savage inhabitants of this Western world.

Should an Indian from Northern Alaska go to Patagonia he could by means of this universal language converse with his southern brethren almost as easily as he could with his neighbors at home. That would also be the case if he visited Central America or met the tribesmen of our own Western prairies and mountains.

When this language was invented no one knows, but every Indian learns it in addition to his own. Once two chiefs of different tribes met in the city of Washington and held a conversation that lasted nearly three hours, yet neither one knew a word of the other's language.

This universal language is of course made up of signs. For example, if an Indian is passing through a strange country and sees other Indians at a distance, he makes the "peace sign;" that is, he holds up his blanket by two corners so that it covers his whole figure. The same thought is expressed by extending the hands, palms outward, slightly inclined from the face. Any Indian would understand either one of these signs.

Then there are the abstract signs by which these men can express their thoughts with regard to the Great Spirit, heaven, good, evil, life and death, sickness, health, riches and poverty. Life is expressed by drawing an imaginary thread from the mouth and death by chopping the head off.

Most white people think that the Indian word of greeting, "How," is merely a contraction of the question, "How are you?" But that is not so. The word is really "aou," which means "brother" or "friend." So when he comes up and growls out this seemingly inquisitive "how," he is not asking after your health, but telling you that he is a friend.

FARMERS GROW FRIENDLY TO SNAKES

"Some snakes may be very useful about a farm, and western farmers are beginning to evince interest in the propogation of a large plains reptile—the bull snake."

Authority for this statement, contained in a bulletin of the National Geographic Society, is Raymond L. Ditmars, who recently returned with his family from a curious vacation he swept in the Georgia swamps, where his daughter captured the most deadly reptile known to that region.

Mr. Ditmars became curator of reptiles of the New York Zoo because his hobby was collecting snakes instead of postage stamps or heathen idols. His collection grew too large, and perhaps too dangerous, for his uptown apartment and he offered them to the Zoo. But the director would not even let them into a Zoo until Mr. Ditmars consented to be their caretaker.

Not that Mr. Ditmars has any illusions about the dangers of snakes. He says, in a communication to the society:

"A great proportion of snakes has become highly specialized. It is among these creatures that we find the most extraordinary and deadly weapons for the purpose of killing the prey that are possessed by any of the vertebrates.

"Popular interest is always strong regarding serpents of great size. All of the very large serpents are members of a single family, the Boidae. None is poisonous, and the members of this family kill their prey by constriction—squeezing it to death.

"The largest known serpent occurs in the Malay Peninsula, Java, Borneo and Sumatra. This is the regal or reticulated python. It attains a length of thirty feet. Second in size is the Indian python, inhabiting the Indian Peninsula, Indo-China, the Malay Peninsula and Java. This constrictor grows to be twenty-five feet long and is very abundant.

"Throughout the temperate and tropical regions of the globe are species of serpents of high economic value. These are mostly the members of the largest family of snakes, the Colubridae. The greater number of the non-venomous serpents belong to this family. Our familiar black snake and king snake are members of this family. In some parts of the world the rodent-eating species are protected by law. Distributed throughout India is a large and active species known as the rat snake. Its useful habits are recognized in many areas. This is likewise the case with a closely related species found throughout tropical America. The creole French call the latter cribo, and in the coastal regions, where the bubonic plague has appeared, there is a fine imposed for the killing of rat-eating snakes.

"Queerly enough, we find some of the deadliest known serpents belonging to the same family as the non-venomous species. The Indian Ocean and the waters of the tropical Pacific are inhabited by a great number of wholly aquatic, vertible sea serpents that possess deadly fangs and sometimes swim in schools of countless thousands. These snakes have a paddle-like tail to assist them in swimming.

"Another offshoot is the subfamily containing the formidable cobras and their allies. The members of this important subfamily are treacherously deceptive in appearance. Here we have an admirable illustration of how incorrect it is to believe a poisonous snake may be told by the possession of a heart-shaped head. A number of the most deadly known snakes belong to this subfamily.

"Most spectacular of the elapine serpents are the cobras, or 'hooded' snakes. The genus Naja, of India, Malaysia and Africa, contains ten of these reptiles, of which the most conspicuous is the Indian or spectacled cobra. Members of several allied genera rear the body from the ground and spread the neck in similar fashion.

"Some of the African cobras display a dangerous habit of spitting poison at the intruder. The ringhals, genus Sepedon, of Southern Africa, is a pitchy black, exceedingly vicious cobra that receives its name from one or two broad white bands that show on the neck when the snake is reared in fighting pose. As the snake arches its neck to glare at the intruder it is liable to eject fine jets of poison for a distance of six or eight feet. These deadly streams are dangerously well aimed.

"The Indian cobras seldom eject their venom in this way. They are the most spectacular of their group, owing to the vivid markings on the 'hood.' With some specimens these appear like a grinning death's head. These are much sought by the Hindu for his snake charming exhibitions.

"In strong contrast to the graceful elapine poisonous snakes, the members of the viper family are thick-bodied and forbidding in appearance. Africa is the home of the typical vipers, and a number of these snakes inhabiting that continent are the most hideously ugly reptiles in existence.

"The gaboon viper ranges over the whole of tropical Africa. The body is exceedingly thick, stub-tailed, with a huge, spade-shaped head. Instead of progressing in ordinary fashion, this reptile throws forward lateral loops of the body and moves along in an oblique direction to that in which the head is pointing. A captive specimen displayed the trait of striking backwards."

SELECTING FIGHTING BULLS

The famous fighting bulls of Spain are among the interests of the Andalusian plains. The Spanish bull often has a rather hollow back; its horns are large, rather wide, and turned up and inward—never short, very thick and turned downward, as is usually the case with bulls of other countries.

In its early youth the Spanish bull roams in comparative freedom over the plain. It makes early acquaintance, however, with the garrochista's pic. Though the latter is merely a pole with no blade, but only a small point, like the short end of an alpenstock, it is a formidable weapon when cleverly wielded.

At the age of about two and a half a crisis arrives in the life of a fighting bull. The ordeal, which every animal must undergo, is one that very few foreigners have witnessed.

In the cool of the late afternoon a party of horsemen gather on a plain, accompanied by a professional picador. Two of the number, armed with long lances, ride up to the herd, round which is a guardian ring of horsemen. It should be mentioned that the full herd has already been split into two portions by the removal of the belled bullocks to a distance of half a mile. The guards now allow a bull to escape, and off the latter goes, at once toward his bullock friends, tail in air, scurrying over the plain, closely pursued by the galloping horsemen.

The latter, indifferently mounted on ewe-necked ponies, do not usually succeed in overhauling their quarry for a few hundred yards; but then the nearest horseman, with his lance in rest, ranges alongside and delivers a prod. The bull turns to one side, letting up the other horseman, who in his turn delivers a thrust and throws the bull over.

Up gets the bull and again flees, pursued, as before, by the horsemen. The whole business is very like pig-sticking, with a much larger and slower quarry. This time the animal makes toward the other horsemen, who, in scattered groups, are for the present spectators and possibly judges of the sport.

Before the bull reaches the latter, however, one of his pursuers ranges alongside once more, when the bull receives a third prod and down he goes again. Thoroughly annoyed, he swings around for the charge, but his immediate adversary has galloped on and is out of reach. He turns his attention, therefore, to number two, whose place has now been taken by the professional picador. This man, with couched lance, awaits the bull's onset. The latter charges again, and yet again, to be received each time on the point of the lance.

And so the game proceeds. If the bull, after receiving a plentiful succession of stabs, which merely inflict flesh wounds and do no serious harm, is undismayed and continues to charge as gamely as ever he is considered to have pluck and fire enough to be worthy of the ring. But should he, finding that his charges are fruitless, turn sulky, refuse to charge his opponents and endeavor to flee from them, he is branded as cowardly, is fattened, and in due time is converted into beef.

QUEER REMEDIES OF THE PAST

Those who criticise the prevalnce of "patent medicines" of various compositions in these days should be interested in recalling the quaint nostrums of the past, which, if they did not outnumber those of to-day at least far surpassed them in ingenuity of composition. For example, there was dried toad, which was reputed to be an unfailing cure for fever. Those of squeamish palates will be relieved to know that it was, happily, for external application only, being placed in the armpit of the fever patient. Dried and powdered fox lung was, however, for internal administration and was held to be a certain remedy for lung and throat troubles.

In this latter, as in various old time remedies, there is to be perceived a foreshadowing of the great principle of therapeutics of the present day which we owe to Louis Pasteur. It really dates back to Paraclaus with his "doctrine of signatures." Thus dried and powdered fox lungs were good for lung troubles, the heart of an ox or other animal was good for cardiac complaints, the ear-shaped leaves of the cyclamen were a specific for ailments of the ear and so on. "A hair of a dog that bit him" was a proverbial prevention of hydrophobia. The dreaded plague was cured by drinking a glass of wine in which had been steeped a lock of hair from the patient's own head.

For ages a raw potato or horsechestnut carried in the pocket was held to be a great paliative, if not a complete cure, for rheumatism, and, indeed, even to this day there are not a few who believe in it and who gravely talk of the power of the tuber or the nut to absorb uric acid or other poison. A bit of the horn or a narwhal was long highly esteemed as a talisman of health. In comparatively recent days common angle worms were an important item in the materia medica of superstitious laymen. Sometimes they were to be made into a broth or syrup for internal use, but more generally they were used externally. The familiar recipe was to fill a pint bottle with angle worms, cork and seal it and bury it in the ground for three weeks. At the end of that time the contents of the bottle would be a liniment of marvellous powers for the cure of paralysis. There can be no question of its powers, though its curative property may be doubted. However, if anything could rouse a paralytic to action, it would be such a mess as the bottle was found to contain.

A popular cure for jaundice was a live spider, which was rolled up in the heart of a small ball of butter and swallowed. Snakes, especially the viper, were greatly used as viper broth, viper stew and dried and pulverized viper. Most abominable of all, however, was the use of parts of dead human bodies. It was long believed that the skull of a criminal who had been hanged, ground into powder and steeped in spirits, was possessed of extraordinary curative potency, and it is a matter of historic record that King Charles II. of England once swallowed twenty-five drops of the mixture for an attack of apoplexy, an unnamed wretched hanged at Tayburn providing the skull. When the body of a criminal was for a long time exposed upon a giblet there grew upon its skull a hideous sort of fungus and this, made into an ointment, was regarded as a sovereign cure for epilepsy.

With all these strange and repulsive practices there was a far greater medical and surgical knowledge in olden times than we are apt to suppose. There were some time ago unearthed at Kolophon, in Greece, surgical implements at least two thousand years old, which included forceps for removing polypus and implements for trepanning skulls and for raising crushed in portions of skull.

But perhaps the most impressive fact of record concerning disease in ancient time is found in the Bible, in the First Book of Samuel, where we are told that the land of the Philistines was overrun with a plague of rats or mice and that thereupon the people were smitten with bubonic plague to punish them for their seizure of the Ark of the Covenant. Thousands of years later our modern science discovered that rats are the chief disseminators of that pestilence.—N. Y. Herald.

GATUN LAKE IS MOST BEAUTIFUL

Tourists through Panama declare that Gatun Lake will become world famous for beauty and its many other attractions.

It is the largest artificial body of water in the world, its area being about 165 square miles. Owing to the many deep indentations in its contour, its numerous peninsulas and promontories, the lake's border is more than 3,000 miles long.

Its greatest depth is about 85 feet. The channel of the canal is more than 35 feet. It is bordered on the extreme northeast and the extreme southwest by mountains 3,000 feet high, whose summits enjoy a temperature of 50 degrees Fahrenheit. The surface of the lake is also fairly cool, owing to the fact that it enjoys the breezes from one or the other of the two oceans all the time; mean annual temperature is about 84 degrees Fahrenheit.

The shores of the lake are heavily timbered in most places, except where Uncle Sam's big pastures have been cleared and planted in guinea grass. The timber consists of mahogany, of the red nispero, the white Santa Maria, the gray roble, the hard and heavy guayacan, the different cedars, the balsam, whose timber is now being used for airplane bodies, beside many hard and soft woods. The palms—cocoanut, ivory nut, corozo, piba, raphia, the "Panama Hat" palm and several others—are scattered along with other trees, sometimes clustered together on a bank, giving the unforgettable tropical look to the scenery. Hundreds of species of orchids, some of them of rare beauty, and so fragrant as to proclaim their presence to the novice.

The level of the water has made many previously inaccessible waterfalls easy to reach in the upper valleys of the numerous rivers. Some of them fall directly into the lake, and one may moor his bark at their feet. Long pendent ferns, thirty feet in length, hang from the boughs of forest giants beside these foaming cataracts.

The jungle along the lake is also alive with game. The big tapir is often seen; the jaguar, called "tiger" by the natives, and the puma, or mountain lion, are seen by hunting parties every week. Plenty of deer, turkey, wild pigeons, quail, pheasants, boars, peccaries, several different sorts of parrots, toucan, the brilliant quezal, the whole tribe of Central American song birds are there. The howling monkey, the marmoset, the ant bears, the black panther, the sloth, the armadillo, and other characteristic specimens of the tropical American fauna may be photographed in their native haunts off the shores of the greater part of the lake. It is a naturalist's paradise, more easily accessible than any similar place in the world.

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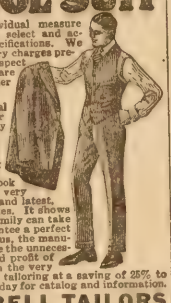

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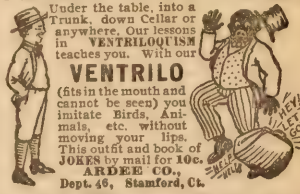

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Indians' Secret of Hair Growth

At a time when I had become discouraged at trying various hair lotions, tonics, specialists' treatments, etc., I came across, in my travels, a Cherokee Indian "medicine man" who had an elixir that he guaranteed would grow my hair. Although I had no faith, I gave it a trial. To my amazement a light fuzz soon appeared. It developed, day by day, into a regular healthy growth and ere long my hair was as prolific as in my youthful days.

That I was amazed and happy is expressing my state of mind mildly.

Hair Grew Luxuriantly

Obviously, the hair roots had not been dead, but were dormant in the scalp, awaiting the fertilizing potency of the mysterious pomade.

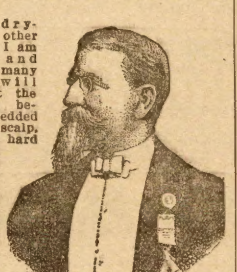
It became my sudden determination to possess the recipe or secret if I could. Having used my most persuasive arguments which convinced the aged savant of my sincerity and that he had only fairness to expect from me, I succeeded in gaining the secret recipe by giving him a valuable rifle in exchange.

I Put the Secret Away

My regular business took all my time, however, and I was compelled to forego my plans to introduce the wonderful Kotal-ko (which I call for short Kotalko) and I put the secret aside for some years.

That my own hair growth was permanent has been amply proved.

My honest belief is that hair roots rarely die even when the hair falls out through dandruff, fever, excessive dryness or other disorders. I am convinced, and am sure many scientists will agree, that the hair roots become imbedded within the scalp, covered by hard skin, so that they are like bulbs or seeds in a bottle which will grow when fertilized. Shampoos (which contain alkalis) and hair lotions which contain alcohol are enemies to the hair, as they dry it, making it brittle.



The Secret Now Revealed

Recently I was induced, while on a business trip to London, to introduce Kotalko, the Indian hair elixir. It met with an immediate demand and has since been introduced throughout England and France, where, despite the war, it is having a great sale. Its popularity comes chiefly from the voluntary endorsements of users. Many persons—men, women and children—are reporting new hair growth. Some cases were really more extraordinary than my own. For instance, a lady reported that Kotalko grew a beautiful supply of blond hair (her natural shade) after her head had been completely bald since a fever nine years previously and she had worn a wig ever since.

A military officer had a bald spot which had been growing larger for some time. Within a few weeks it was completely covered.

I could mention numerous examples. Now, having made arrangements here, I intend to supply Kotalko, according to the genuine Indians' formula to whomsoever wishes to obtain it.

Recipe Given Free

The recipe shall be pleased to mail, free. Address: John Hart Brittain, BE-101, Station F, New York, N. Y. When you have grown new hair please send me a letter giving the facts for my files.

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